

# **DIAKONIA'S GLOBAL STRATEGY**

**2021 and onwards**

Adopted by the Board of Directors December 3, 2020.

Latest revision December 4, 2025.

Diakonia's global strategy is open ended and based on Diakonia's policy imperative. Instead of having a fixed end date, the strategy has a horizon of approximately five years that is constantly being extended. To stay relevant, the strategy is revised and updated annually based on changes in context and lessons learned in the organization.

## WHO WE ARE

Diakonia is a Swedish rights-based and faith-based development organization that works to change unfair structures that generate poverty, inequality, oppression and violence. The organisation was founded in 1966 and is today rooted in two Christian denominations: the Swedish Alliance Mission and the Uniting Church in Sweden. Our vision and mission are based on theological reflection and the universality of human rights. Diakonia works together with partner organizations, movements and other relevant civil society actors in Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Middle East and Sweden.

## HOW WE SEE THE WORLD

This context analysis summarises the reality that Diakonia's Global Strategy responds to. The first paragraph is revised once a year.

Aid policy has never shifted as quickly and as drastically as now. The mid-2020s is a moment of **geopolitical turbulence and unprecedented changes to the international donor landscape**. Old alliances end and new ones emerge. The indifference of the United States government to democratic institutions and established forms of multilateralism has sent both U.S. domestic politics and international relations into a tailspin. The halting of USAID funding alongside significant aid reductions from the Netherlands, Switzerland, Finland, and the EU are already having seismic impact on life and death and on people's ability to organise to defend democracy, human rights and gender equality. While having to deal with the disastrous outcomes of these abrupt cuts, civil society actors in the Majority World<sup>1</sup> are also calling for new and different relationships that move away from racist, patriarchal and colonial models of aid dependency. The global Shift the Power movement is challenging traditional development logic to create more inclusive and participatory systems based on community-driven solutions rather than the current unjust system. This is a call for **global solidarity, distributed leadership, and people-centred development**. The coming years will be marked by many uncertainties that can take the world in different directions: towards a more nationalist, less democratic, more polarised and less open world, where the privileged expand their privilege even further at the expense of the rest – or towards a more democratic, trustful and open world, in which all people can live a life in dignity.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'Majority World' refers to countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America as well as Indigenous peoples. It has been established as an alternative to previously used terms that are increasingly seen as problematic, is less arbitrary than the geographically incorrect term 'Global South' and highlights the fact that those countries whose decisions affect a majority of the world's peoples in fact represent a tiny minority of humankind.

Regardless, it is clear that a vibrant, autonomous and well-resourced civil society is more necessary and relevant than ever.

**Closing civic space** continues to be a global trend and now includes some previously stable and established democracies with strong institutions (such as several European countries). While online space is growing and providing room for civil society to act in new and different ways, only 40 out of 198 countries and territories have an open civic space rating with widespread respect for civic freedoms. 72.4 percent of the global population lives under restricted or closed civic space, with widespread and routine repression of fundamental freedoms. Detentions and arrests are used as a tactic to prevent and disperse protests and punish protesters, there is significant escalation of the prosecution of human rights defenders, and restrictive laws are used to limit civil society activities.

This shapes the ability of people in general and **women and LGBTQI+ persons** in particular to exercise their rights; and for the possibility of the civil society organisations that represent them to operate freely. In the attacks on civil society, it is often democracy, climate and environmental activists and women's and LGBTQI+ rights defenders who are targeted first and most severely. Progress achieved over decades in women's and LGBTQI+ rights has slowed down, and the advances of the anti-rights movements have resulted in more politically motivated violence and harassment offline and online of gender justice activists and LGBTQI+ rights defenders. Despite the growing acknowledgment of the role of women's, feminist, and LGBTQI+ rights organizations and movements, new OECD data shows that they are still structurally underfunded.

The **crisis of liberal democracy** manifests in many ways. Currently over 70% of the world's population live in autocracies. Freedom of expression, transparent and fair elections, and freedom of association are all negatively affected. Global governance institutions are under attack and have also actively delegitimized themselves by turning a blind eye to atrocities and making decisions that undermine international law. Severe and increasing **political and societal polarization** damages democratic institutions and shatters fundamental informal norms of tolerance and moderation that regulate political competition. It also penetrates everyday interactions and relationships among regular people. Those driving and facilitating polarization often pivot their arguments around gender justice issues such as abortion rights, the definition of sexual harassment or LGBTQI+ persons' rights; making women, LGBTQI+ persons and migrants pawns in the debate and targeted for their attacks. The crisis is also rooted in the failure by more progressive governments to respond to expectations on welfare, justice and opportunity, and a steady trend since over 40 years of increasing social and economic gaps for the large majority of the world's population.

The current version of **multilateralism is under attack**. A shifting geopolitical order brings new alliances, new loyalties, and new disputes over hegemonic power. While it generates chaos in many processes and systems, this rupture also creates opportunities to change an unjust system and push for a fairer future.

The global **anti-rights movement** consists of a global network rooted in far-right ideologies, tied to religious and conservative values. Actively working against the recognition, protection, and advancement of human rights; the movement is well funded, well-coordinated, and well connected. No longer just trying to attack global governance structures and multilateral institutions from the outside, it is also strategically undermining human rights from inside the system, co-opting human rights processes, entrenching regressive norms, and undermining accountability. Anti-rights actors build alliances based on nationality and religion and hinge their narratives on topics such as ‘family values’, abortion rights, and issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity. In many countries, the movement is also working from within civil society as a counterforce to those fighting for human rights and gender equality – all with the support and complicity of private businesses and religious and political leaders. Their influence fuels physical violence against feminist, women’s rights and LGBTQI+ activists and migrants; and it contributes to closing the civic space of women’s and LGBTQI+ persons’ organisations. The movement’s financial architecture includes a variety of sources, including wealthy individuals, nonprofit organizations, and religious institutions. At the same time, **progressive faith actors** are working together with rights-based movements to bridge polarisation and create common ground. The strong influence that faith-based actors and structures has on social norms and institutions is increasingly being recognised within the development community as a potential force for good.

**Digital justice** where online spaces are shaped and inhabited by diverse people is far-off. While potentially massively empowering, a super connector of people across geographies, and a leveler of the political playing field; the internet is also a site of – and a vehicle for – oppression. Disinformation, hate speech and propaganda have instant and global reach. Contrary to the illusion of neutrality in AI systems, **algorithmic bias** effectively reproduces and amplifies certain narratives – such as racist and sexist stereotypes – and hide others. Digital surveillance is actively used against civil society. As an increasing portion of political and civic life moves online, the **gender digital divide** plays an important role. **Technology facilitated gender-based violence** has a devastating impact on women, girls and LGBTQI+ persons’ safety, wellbeing, ability to express themselves online, and their ability to participate in public debate and decision-making spaces.

**Overlapping and protracted crises** are expected to shape most people’s lives in the coming years. The crisis of liberal democracy in combination with conflict, economic shocks and climate extremes have created a reality where almost 300 million people need humanitarian assistance and protection, the largest global food crisis in modern history is unfolding with hundreds of millions of people at risk of worsening hunger, and almost 2 billion people – a quarter of humanity – live in conflict-affected areas. Many in already vulnerable conditions across the world are being pushed below the poverty line. Any crisis intensifies existing gender inequalities – leading to increases in unpaid care work for women and sexual and gender-based violence, difficulty accessing sexual and reproductive health and rights including safe abortion, and even more girls being taken out of school to reduce family expenditure. As militarism and patriarchy combine in conflict, women are further excluded from political processes when these become militarised and oriented towards a narrowly defined version of ‘security’.

2024 was the hottest year in recorded history. We are in a **triple planetary crisis** of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste; and **climate change is recognized as a ‘threat multiplier’**. In the last 60 years, at least 40% of all intrastate conflicts have had a link to natural resources. Climate change and rapid environmental degradation exacerbate the risks of gender-based violence due to displacement, resource scarcity and food insecurity and disruption to service provision for survivors. If the U.S. removes itself from the entire UN framework underpinning global climate negotiations, this will likely jeopardize the follow-through of the agreement and empower opponents of climate action. Meanwhile research demonstrates that a majority of people globally support policy action against climate change.

Indigenous people’s organisations continue to be at the forefront not only in the fight for their rights but also in the protection of lands, resources and territories. While faced with systematic structural discrimination, they continue to play a unique and vital leadership role in the struggle for climate justice in particular.

Galloping **inequality is a key driver of poverty**. Billionaire wealth increased three times faster in 2024 than in 2023. Income and wealth inequality, jobless growth, tax evasion, illicit financial flows and corruption are expected to further increase unequal access to basic social services such as education and health, and to natural resources such as land and water. The current economic system and its markets centre models based on colonial and extractive logic as well as a patriarchal worldview in which unpaid care work – although it is what underpins and enables all and any economic activity – is ignored and not understood. This in turn reproduces the current unsustainable economic system, and the paradigm of never-ending economic growth continues to drive the unequal, unjust and unsustainable use of global resources. The race for minerals that can make possible a green transition reproduces colonial patterns. Its benefits are reaped mainly in the Minority World and its costs fall primarily on the Majority World, in particular Indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups. 343 million people in 74 countries are facing chronic hunger. 1.9 million people are on the brink of famine.

Currently, half of the world’s population is under 25 and in many countries, more than two thirds are **young people**. This presents an opportunity as young people drive and adapt to change, play a key role in climate activism, drive the use of technology, and are organising in new ways that challenge adult civil society. At the same time, high youth unemployment rates, poverty and a lack of opportunities risk excluding several generations from the formal economy, and they are often targeted for extremist and criminal recruitment.

While most **migration** is domestic, 3.6% or 281 million people in the world are international migrants. Many fill labour shortages in the host countries and at an estimated USD 831 billion, international remittances far overshadow official development assistance and foreign direct investment. Forced displacement is at a historical high, and the situation is further exacerbated by environmental impact and climate change. While migrants and refugees often see their right violated and are targeted by nationalist, xenophobic and racist populist narratives in host

countries; migration continues to be a supporting pillar of many economies, societies and families worldwide.

While the global context is incredibly challenging, it would be infinitely worse if it were not for the work that civil society does and has been doing for decades. Rather than forcing defeat, the bleak outlook inspires **resistance, creativity and innovation**. Diverse rights-based civil society actors are permanently innovating to find inclusive solutions for all the challenges outlined above. They call for a rules-based order where clear laws and policies are followed to tackle climate change, end poverty, address deep economic inequality, de-escalate conflicts and prevent gross human rights violations. In addition to visualizing and working towards a more just world, civil society practically addresses the challenges of here and now – whether by documenting human rights violations, advocating for legal and policy reform, providing humanitarian aid, creating counter-narratives to anti-rights rhetoric, defending the integrity of electoral processes, leading reconstruction efforts, mediating in conflicts, or mobilizing and raising the awareness of the general public. Young people are increasingly active and tone-setting in civil society. Despite massive barriers, feminist, women’s rights and LGBTQI+ movements in all their diversity are not only moving the needle but shifting paradigms when it comes to social norms.

# THE WORLD WE WANT TO SEE – DIAKONIA'S VISION

## A just, equal and sustainable world

### A just world

Diakonia strives for a world in which all people are able to enjoy their inherent individual and collective fundamental rights so they can live a life in dignity. A just world also requires a fair distribution of resources and opportunities.

### An equal world

Diakonia works for a world in which nobody is constrained by prejudice, inequality or stereotypical expectations, in which each person is free to shape and decide over their life and body. A world in which gender equality and equity prevail, and oppressive power structures are dismantled to ensure that no one is discriminated against for any reason.

### A sustainable world

Diakonia seeks to counteract inequality and contribute to peaceful, resilient societies that live in harmony with the earth's resources. This includes a commitment to addressing global climate challenges and environmental degradation and to preventing violent conflicts. It requires just solutions that recognise the unequal distribution of climate debt, and how the consequences of climate change, environmental degradation and violent conflict exacerbate inequality and poverty.

# WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE – DIAKONIA'S MISSION AND OVERALL GOAL

Diakonia's mission and overall goal is to change unfair structures – political, economic, social and cultural – that generate poverty and inequality, oppression and violence. We work together with partner organizations, movements and other relevant actors to secure the right to a life in dignity for all people – regardless of their age, sex, class, disability, ethnicity, gender, nationality, political conviction, religion or sexual expression and identity.

## WHAT WE BELIEVE IN – DIAKONIA'S VALUES

Diakonia's identity is characterised by five values. These are inspired by the founding churches' theological reflection, as well as by our real-life experiences of facing numerous challenges when pursuing our mission. These values guide our strategic choices, day-to-day decisions and behaviour. They serve as both a reminder of who we are and a description of the work we do. Diakonia believes in people's ability to bring about positive change. When we come together, we can change the world.

### **Solidarity**

Solidarity is a fundamental part of Diakonia's institutional identity and a key to how we understand human relationships. Our imperative is therefore to stand with and accompany rights holders, partner organizations and other change actors striving for a just, equal and sustainable world.

### **Justice**

Oppression and poverty derive from injustice. Diakonia works for fair societies and social structures in which all people can enjoy their freedom and human rights without facing discrimination.

### **Courage**

Together with others, Diakonia counteracts oppressive forces and power structures. Diakonia believes that for the world to change, unfair power structures must be challenged and changed, but challenging privileges and power entails a risk and often requires a great deal of courage from the organization.

### **Commitment**

Securing sustainable change requires a long-term commitment – not backing out or giving up as difficulties mount up along the way. When people are aware of their rights and join forces to make demands, they can change the world. However, societies are complex, encompassing multiple interests, including resistance to change. This makes the change we want to see unpredictable and progress non-linear.

### **Accountability**

Diakonia's mission demands a high level of trust and accountability towards rights holders, partner organizations, donors and our founding churches. Diakonia is transparent, takes responsibility for the resources allocated to the organization, presents the results openly and welcomes complaints.



# HOW WE BELIEVE CHANGE HAPPENS – DIAKONIA'S THEORY OF CHANGE

Diakonia's Theory of Change is at the core of all we do and underpins every resource we mobilize to promote lasting change. It is the vehicle with which we move within our focus areas towards our mission and vision, standing firmly on our foundation of values. It reflects our belief in how meaningful change happens.

We therefore contextualise and adapt the theory of change to each change process we engage in, and we adjust it when conditions and/or our analysis changes. Diakonia aspires to be adaptive, responsive and move with agility and accountability in complex, unpredictable and often risky contexts.

Diakonia's Theory of Change is made up of three building blocks. The three building blocks are seen as parts of a whole, with all parts needed for change to be sustainable. While we seldom can expect linear causality between the three building blocks, and while we recognise that they all nurture each other, we do see movement from the first to the last to a certain extent.

We believe that people change the world. People drive change using their own voice and their own identity. People's drive and passion, combined with knowledge of their rights and of the root causes of their lack of fulfilment in their particular context, is *the first building block* of our Theory of Change.

The *second building block* is to facilitate this drive and knowledge being turned into effective agency to challenge the destructive paradigms of the patriarchy, unsustainable growth, exclusion and inequality that regenerate poverty, oppression, violence and injustice, and lead to the lack of rights fulfilment. We believe that these paradigms are most effectively challenged when people come together, grow together and take collective action, be it in more organised ways or more informally and spontaneously.

The *third and final building block* regards the nature of the action and towards whom it is directed. There is a large toolbox for pursuing rights. They can be claimed, defended, expressed and advocated as determined by each context, from the very local level to national or international level. What is common to all contexts is that the change we seek needs to take place in fundamentally two arenas: the formal arena of structures made up of institutions and legislation on the one hand, and social norms on the other. In times of limited democratic and civic space, the focus will be on the latter.

## WHAT WE FOCUS ON

Diakonia's work focuses on human rights, democracy and gender justice. Based on our experiences and expertise, we believe that focusing on these three interlinked areas is the best way for us to contribute to eradicating poverty, inequality, oppression and violence, and to support people of all genders and ages in claiming power and resources.

### Democracy and Civic space

Diakonia believes in societies where all voices are heard, people actively participate in decision-making, and leaders uphold human rights and the rule of law. A robust democracy requires both formal structures, like fair elections and independent media, and a strong democratic culture that embraces diversity and tolerance. Universal values such as accountability, transparency, respect for human rights, and a fair distribution of power define true democracies globally.

**Civic space** is fundamental to a functioning democracy. It refers to the conditions that enable individuals and groups to freely access information, express themselves, associate, organize, and participate meaningfully in public life. This environment allows people to engage in civic action, influencing political, economic, and social structures without hindrance.

Diakonia observes a global trend of regimes undermining democratic principles, often linked to controlling natural resources. Therefore, defending civic space is crucial for Diakonia's strategy to safeguard democracy, human rights, and peace. Without civic space, democracy weakens, failing to achieve its goal of open, free, and diverse governance.

### Human rights

Diakonia firmly believes that all people, regardless of their circumstances or location, are entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of **all human rights** – civil, political, economic, social, and cultural. These rights, alongside international humanitarian law, are globally enshrined and are critical for fostering **peace and security** in an increasingly volatile world.

The recent global landscape with protracted crises, underscores the fragility of these protections and the heightened vulnerability of populations. These events highlight how rights are routinely denied, not just by states, but also by armed non-state actors and even the private sector. The climate crisis disproportionately affects vulnerable populations and threatens fundamental rights. Climate change widens existing inequalities and creates new ones, and the impacts directly infringe upon fundamental human rights.

Diakonia emphasizes that while states bear the primary responsibility for upholding human rights, all power holders must actively respect, protect, promote, and fulfil them, especially amidst global health crises, widespread displacement, and ongoing armed conflicts. Our work remains centred on empowering those whose rights are most at risk, advocating for accountability, and ensuring that no one is left behind in the face of such profound challenges.

## Gender justice

Diakonia believes that all people regardless of gender, sex and sexual orientation, expression or identity should have the power, knowledge and resources to contribute to shaping their own life and the society they live in. This is what we mean by gender justice.

Patriarchal structures, norms and attitudes permeate every part of society. For gender justice to be realised, transformative change must take place in many different spheres. This transformation is needed in our individual consciousness and capabilities, in people's access to resources and services, in collective social norms and in the laws, rules and policies that govern our societies.

Gender inequality is one of the deepest and most pervasive injustices of the world, and it is a severe violation of human rights. It stops people from being free, from making decisions about their own lives and bodies and from having a say in the continued building of their communities and societies. Therefore, in addition to being a goal in and of itself, gender justice is also a prerequisite for any other change that Diakonia works for. Without it, there can be no democracy, human rights, economic justice, climate justice or peace. There is no justice without gender justice.

## HOW WE WORK – GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To ensure sustainable change and dignified living conditions for all people, everything we do must be rooted in the Human Rights Based Approach and Diakonia's feminist principles.

### Human Rights Based Approach

The Human Rights Based Approach aims to 1) Empower rights holders to exercise their rights and hold duty bearers accountable, 2) Strengthen the capacity of duty bearers to meet their obligations, 3) Address the underlying drivers and root causes of inequality, discrimination, and injustice that hinder development and violate rights.

The key principles that underpin a Human Rights-Based Approach are often summarized by the acronym **PANEL**:

- **P - Participation:** Everyone has the right to active, free, meaningful, and inclusive participation in decisions that affect their human rights. This means ensuring that all relevant stakeholders, especially those most marginalized, are involved and can influence outcomes.
- **A - Accountability:** Duty-bearers (governments, institutions, etc.) are held accountable for fulfilling their human rights obligations. This requires effective monitoring, transparent processes, and mechanisms for redress when human rights are violated.
- **N - Non-discrimination and Equality:** All forms of discrimination must be prohibited, prevented, and eliminated. Special attention should be given to identifying and addressing the needs of those who face the biggest barriers to realizing their rights, ensuring that rights are enjoyed equally by all.

- **E - Empowerment:** Individuals and communities are empowered to know, understand, and claim their rights. This involves providing information, building skills, and creating an environment where people can actively participate in shaping policies and practices that affect their lives.
- **L - Legality:** The approach must be grounded in the legal rights set out in domestic and international human rights laws and standards. This ensures that human rights are recognized as legally enforceable entitlements and that laws themselves are consistent with human rights principles.

By applying these principles, the Human Rights Based Approach aims to create lasting and systemic change that prioritizes human dignity, justice, and equality for all.

## Diakonia's feminist principles

Diakonia believes that gender justice is the goal, and operating based on feminist principles is the way to get there. Basing our operations on these principles means that we commit to:

- Making patriarchal structures visible, challenging them and addressing their root causes, not just their manifestations.
- Supporting and being not just a donor but also an ally to women's and feminist movements and organizations at local, national, regional and global levels, as we recognise them as the primary actors in the fight for gender justice.
- Always defending certain core issues, regardless of whether we work directly with them or not, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights, the right to live free from gender-based violence, the recognition and remuneration of women's unpaid care work, women's participation in decision-making and the rights of LGBTQI+ persons.
- Implementing a transformative gender mainstreaming perspective, meaning that all projects and programmes we support must contribute to a tangible improvement towards gender justice, regardless of whether or not this is a standalone objective of the project.
- Ensuring that at least one third of our funding to partners goes to feminist, women's rights and LGBTQI+ organisations; as their well-documented role in furthering gender justice in all societies is unique.
- Based on this dual-track approach (stand alone and mainstreaming), including diverse partner organisations in our programming and advocacy work towards gender justice, as we recognise that we all have a role to play in achieving gender justice.

# **DIAKONIA'S ROLE – FUNDING PARTNER, ALLY AND VOICE FOR CHANGE**

Diakonia is a trusted and experienced funding partner and ally to global civil society, with a long history of working alongside partners in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. In our partnerships, we seek to challenge traditional donor–recipient dynamics and the underlying power structures, fostering trust, honesty, and mutual respect, while committing to freedom from all forms of colonialism, racism, and patriarchy. We align with each partner's own accountability cycle to rights holders, ensuring relevance, effectiveness, local ownership, and, ultimately, sustainability.

Our partnerships go beyond financial support. Guided by context, needs, opportunities, and available resources, Diakonia can take on different roles, and may serve as a connector to strategic stakeholders, a critical friend and advisor, a convener and catalyst for synergies, a broker and producer of knowledge and expertise, or a trainer. When relevant, we also draw on our faith-based identity to open strategic doors. Grounded in our work with rights holders and partners, we act as an advocate and amplifier, as well as a watchdog for human rights, international humanitarian law, democracy, gender justice, and civic space. Equally, we commit to listening, learning, and innovating together, drawing on the experiences and insights of partners and rights holders as we navigate complex and challenging contexts.

With our strong position and voice in Sweden, we influence Swedish and European politics through Diakonia's and our partners' analyses, and we engage the Swedish public on international development and solidarity. Together, we co-create and work for lasting change.

## **WHAT WE WORK WITH**

Diakonia's mission and goal will be achieved through the following approaches:

### **Development cooperation**

Diakonia carries out development cooperation programmes that address the root causes of poverty, inequality, oppression and violence. The programmes are developed based on local, national, regional and global context analysis. They are consistent with Diakonia's focus on human rights, democracy and gender justice, as well as the Theory of Change, the aim being to bring about long-term change and sustainable impact. Horizontal relations with partner organizations are at the core of the programmes, but we also build strategic alliances with civil society in all its forms and collaborate with other change actors.

## **Nexus approach: Development, humanitarian and peace reinforcing each other**

Diakonia seeks to break down the traditional silos between development, humanitarian, and peace efforts, recognising them as complementary and mutually reinforcing through a nexus approach. In fragile settings, we work to integrate these approaches to strengthen resilience, foster social cohesion, and improve preparedness. This holistic integration enables communities to better withstand, adapt to, and recover from shocks and crises.

### **Humanitarian work**

Diakonia works alongside partner organizations and allies to support communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from humanitarian emergencies. Our partners, trusted by and deeply connected to rights holders, provide tailored support before, during, and after crises, adapting to the specific needs of each context. To maximise impact, Diakonia's assistance is coordinated with — and complements — the efforts of other actors. Our humanitarian work is firmly guided by the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence.

### **Policy, advocacy and mobilisation**

In line with our theory of change, mobilisation and advocacy are at the core of most of our partner organizations' strategies across the globe, as is also the case for Diakonia as an actor in its own right in Sweden, Europe, and when possible in other parts of the world. In Sweden there is a strong focus on our base of congregations and activist groups, as we invite people to take part in the global struggle for a just, equal and sustainable world by raising awareness and facilitating their mobilisation in advocacy work. Grounded in the voices of rights holders and partners, Diakonia develops policy positions and carries out advocacy towards decision-makers, donors, the private sector, the public, and other influential actors.

## **WHAT CUTS ACROSS ALL OUR WORK – DIAKONIA'S MAINSTREAMING PERSPECTIVES**

No matter what change we want to see, three perspectives will cut across and permeate all Diakonia's work, both internally and externally: conflict sensitivity, gender justice and concern for the environment. We call this mainstreaming, and it implies that we need to address these perspectives in all work that Diakonia engages in.

### **Gender**

In both programming and advocacy work, Diakonia applies the dual-track approach of taking forward both gender mainstreaming and stand-alone gender work. We are committed to applying a transformative gender perspective to all the work we support, with the aim of all operations clearly and tangibly contributing to gender justice.

We acknowledge the contributions and different roles of diverse actors in the fight for gender justice. However, we recognise that women's, feminist and LGBTQI+ movements and organisations at the local, national, regional and global levels are the primary actors in this fight. We see that if gender justice is the goal, feminism is the way there. Therefore, Diakonia is committed to operating based on feminist principles.

## **Conflict**

Peace is a prerequisite for sustainable development, and Diakonia recognises that democracy, human rights and gender justice will not be achieved in a context of social unrest, political violence or violent conflict. We therefore commit to recognising, understanding and responding to conflict in our conduct and our work. This perspective demands that we understand the conflicts we interact with and continuously adapt and adjust to control our impact. We take the "do no harm" approach to ensure conflict sensitivity. Diakonia seeks to prevent and respond to conflict by investing in the factors that support and foster sustainable peace.

## **Environment/Climate change**

To effectively promote the advancement of human rights, democracy and gender justice Diakonia embraces environmental mainstreaming to support rightsholders, communities and organizations in their actions aimed at increasing resilience in terms of adaptation, risk management and advocacy. While Diakonia's focus is on human rights, democracy and gender justice, the climate crisis is affecting rights holders' approach to them. Slow onset impacts like extreme weather, rising seas, and biodiversity loss threaten basic human rights, such as the rights to life, health, food, and housing. These changes also disrupt local democracy, further aggravating existing injustices such as gender inequality, hitting the most vulnerable groups the hardest. At the same time, climate adaptation can be an opportunity to strengthen local governance, women's leadership, and for advocacy to hold duty bearers accountable to the fulfilment of these rights. Diakonia is committed to report and disclose the carbon footprint of its own operations and working to reduce it through its environmental management system.

# **WHO WE WORK WITH**

Diakonia's core commitment is to stand with and accompany rights holders, partner organizations, and other change agents working for a just, equal, and sustainable world. We seek a diverse network of partners to complement strengths, overcome barriers, and drive lasting change.

Guided by multi-dimensional poverty and power analyses rooted in local knowledge, we identify both formal and informal civil society actors who challenge the systems and structures that perpetuate poverty, patriarchy, injustice, conflict, human rights violations, and environmental destruction. We look for partners who create tangible impact for rights holders and remain accountable to the communities they serve. Internal democracy and a commitment to leaving no one behind are essential values in our partnerships.

Our partners range from rural community-based organizations to national, regional, and international civil society networks. Given that nearly half the world's population is under 25 — and that 85% of them live in the Majority World — young people are central to Diakonia's mission. In line with our feminist principles, women and girls are prioritised across all our work.

## **WHERE WE WORK – GEOGRAPHICAL PRIORITIES**

Diakonia has a local presence across Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East — areas where we believe our work can drive meaningful change. Our primary strategy is to operate through contextually relevant programmes at the country, regional, and global levels, each playing a vital role in advancing our mission. By integrating efforts across these levels, we strengthen our overall impact, ensure coherence, and amplify our added value.

To remain responsive and effective, we regularly assess the relevance and impact of our programmes. These evaluations guide strategic decisions about where and how we work, enabling us to adapt to evolving contexts and needs.

Balancing a broad geographic reach with operational efficiency, Diakonia is adopting shared staffing models. This flexible approach maximises resources while strengthening our ability to remain responsive, sustainable, and effective in diverse and changing contexts.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL**

Guided by its overarching organizational goal, Diakonia strives to remain fit for purpose and to deliver its strategy effectively. While the goal itself is not bound by a specific timeframe, the path toward achieving it follows a three-year cycle that is regularly monitored and adjusted as needed.

Organizational goal: Diakonia develops as a financially sustainable, agile, and trusted organization with effective programs, strong contextual knowledge, and relevance to rightsholders. We aim to build a stronger global identity and create synergies across contexts.