

PEOPLE CHANGE THE WORLD

Diakonia's role and attitude in the world is characterised by five values. These are inspired by Diakonia's Christian values, as well as by the organization's collective experience and analysis of the outside world. The words guide our strategic choices and decisions. They serve as both a reminder to constantly keep these values alive and a description of the work we do. Diakonia believes in people's ability to bring about positive change together. When we come together we can change the world.

Solidarity

For Diakonia, solidarity is a fundamental part of our institutional identity and a key to how we understand human relationships. We see it as our mission to walk together with rights holders, partner organizations and other forces of good to demonstrate through practical action that together we form a powerful movement in which everyone is fighting for a better world.

Justice

Diakonia sees the foundations of oppression and poverty as a matter of justice. We work for fair societies and structures where every person can enjoy their freedom and human rights without being discriminated against.

Courage

Together with others, Diakonia stands up against oppressive forces and power structures. Together, we challenge the privileges of power and work for freedom, justice, redress, peace and reconciliation. Diakonia goes into that work conscious of the fact that it is often risky and requires courage.

Commitment

When people are aware of their rights and join forces to organize themselves and make demands, it is possible to change the world. This process often takes a long time and requires a long-term commitment, sacrifice and hard work. Often these processes are neither predictable nor linear. Diakonia therefore takes a long-term perspective, with its sights firmly set on our vision of a just, equitable and sustainable world.

Accountability

Diakonia's mission involves a high level of accountability towards rights holders, partner organizations, donors and our principals. Diakonia therefore has a transparent way of working, takes responsibility for the resources allocated to us and presents the results we contribute to and achieve ourselves. We also hold decision makers and others in charge accountable for their actions.

This policy document is an expression of Diakonia's values and basic starting points. Diakonia's work is based on Christian values, and the struggle to uphold and respect human rights is an obvious expression of this. For Diakonia, the focus is on rights-based work and rights holders around the world. It is people who are changing the world.

Approved by the annual meeting May 28th 2020.

DIAKONIA'S POLICY



Foto: Gustav Hugosson. Baby Akter, Bangladesh

INTRODUCTION

Diakonia is the joint development organization of the Uniting Church in Sweden and the Swedish Alliance Mission. The organization was formed in 1966 under the name *Frikyrkan Hjälper* (Swedish Free Churches Aid) in response to a disastrous famine in India.

Since 1985, the organization has been known as Diakonia. It refers to *diakoni*, the Greek word for service or care. The term occurs in the Christian tradition to describe the task of the Christian congregation to distribute common resources fairly.

Diakonia's principals are based in Sweden and form part of the worldwide church. They exist as part of a tradition of popular movements and the pursuit of everyone's equal value and democratic influence. For the principals, the struggle for religious freedom is of great importance, as is the right and ability of all people to read and interpret the Bible's words themselves.

Being principals of Diakonia is one of the ways in which the Uniting Church in Sweden and the Swedish Alliance Mission express the Christian mission of standing up for and safeguarding Creation. The two principals conduct operations both in Sweden and in other parts of the world, on their own or with other actors. Diakonia strives for consensus and cooperation with the principals where possible.

Diakonia's activities are based on Christian values, and the work is based on cooperation with people of different religions and with different outlooks on life. Diakonia's interpretation of the Christian message is that it is in clear harmony with rights-based work and human rights. Diakonia is inspired by the stories of Jesus' life and deeds, his way of challenging given power structures and treating everyone without partiality.

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

DIAKONIA'S VISION: A JUST, EQUAL AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD

A just world

According to the Christian faith, human beings are created in the image of God. For Diakonia, this means that every person has an inherent value and innate rights. The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an expression of this. It describes the rights of the individual and what it means to be able to live a dignified life. The declaration, together with the conventions developed from it, forms a basis for Diakonia's work. Human rights are indivisible, universal and interdependent. It is the duty of states to maintain them. Diakonia also believes that companies and other non-state actors have a responsibility to respect each person's inherent and innate rights.

The mission of the church is to imitate Jesus and demonstrate God's love for all humankind. Diakonia contributes to this mission in several ways. By analysing the forces behind injustice, Diakonia is able to work for a fair distribution of resources. By tackling the world's social and economic injustices and working to expose unjust structures, Diakonia can contribute to greater justice.

An equal world

Diakonia works for a world where nobody is constrained by prejudice or stereotyped expectations, where every person is free to shape and decide over their life and body. A world where gender equality and equity prevails and oppressive power structures are broken down.

Central to the Christian faith is the story of how Jesus was sentenced to death by the rulers of that time. The story reminds us to question and counter the destructive wielding of power in our surroundings, as well as to review our own methods in order to contribute to positive change. We are working to counteract such power structures and see that the lack of gender equality runs through all these structures. For this reason, we work in accordance with Diakonia's feminist principles to identify and counteract patriarchal values in our own work, in the religious tradition and in society at large.

A sustainable world

According to the Christian faith, people are equipped with free will and a mission to be stewards of the Earth and all that is created. Too often, that mission has been misunderstood and been interpreted as human beings having been appointed to rule over and exploit the Earth's resources.

Instead, Diakonia wants to take the mission as stewards seriously and contribute to peaceful living environments, sustainable management of the Earth's resources and counteracting economic and social divisions. That includes a clear commitment to our world's climate challenges. This fateful issue for humanity requires fair solutions that recognise the unequal distribution of both climate debt and the consequences of climate change.