

STRATEGIC PLAN

FOR ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN

For the sake of life and us together in the worldwide church, share the Gospel in words and deeds, defend human dignity, safeguard the Creation and live in faith, hope and love.

Our vision is life in the realm of God – a healed Creation and humanity as one, together with justice, freedom and peace.

This document governs the work of Act Church of Sweden. The document describes the identity, mission, theory of change and strategic working methods for Act Church of Sweden. It is a revised version of the strategic plan for Act Church of Sweden for the period 2018–2022 (Ks 2016/0463) and replaces it.

The document was approved by the Church Board on 16 December 2021 to be valid from 1 January 2022.

The strategic plan is followed up in connection with the annual strategic meeting. Evaluation and review shall be seen as an integral part of the ongoing follow-up and carried out if necessary.

Erik Lysén
Director, Act Church of Sweden

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Chairman of the Board, Church
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FOREWORD

Act Church of Sweden – the name itself expresses the power of action that is released by the Christian hope. Together with partner churches and partners around the world, we work to make the world a better place for many people.

For many, life has become more dangerous. The threats against employees and leaders in civil society organisations are growing, as are the restrictions on freedom of assembly and expression. This democratic crisis is occurring at the same time as the severe consequences of climate change for societal development are becoming increasingly clear. At the same time, through digitalisation, we are in a massive shift in technology that entails great opportunities but also threats and risks.

There are many reasons to despair, even for those who believe. But God has entrusted us with the gift of cultivating hope even in difficult situations! On Good Friday, the Cross appeared as the final defeat of unselfish love. On Easter, however, it was turned into a sign of victory. Jesus lives! He goes before us, and it is him that we meet in the smallest of our sisters and brothers. There is a surplus of goodness in our world, despite all evil. We are challenged to increase this surplus. To see further. To carry on the stories of hope born out of hardships and burdens.¹

In Act Church of Sweden's new, revised strategic plan, it is emphasised that it is people, churches and organisations in the local context who are often persistent in hope and have experience and abilities to formulate the answers to the challenges they face, but that they need global solidarity to change the laws, structures and injustices that risk locking them in poverty and oppression.

Solidarity takes many forms. A necessary part is to mobilise commitment and carry out fundraisers among private individuals and among the congregations of the Church of Sweden. Solidarity is also about, in cooperation with global ecumenical bodies, conducting advocacy work aimed at national and global decision-makers on issues relating to peace, climate, human rights, and gender justice. In this way, we contribute to creating conditions to strengthen people and local communities. Act Church of Sweden's – as well as our ecumenical alliances' – positions in national and global advocacy work are and shall be theologically motivated. This must be the case when we want to testify about Jesus in word and deed. People's perceived feelings of vulnerability and exclusion characterise the questions we ask and the perspectives we highlight.

It is an important expression of our calling as Christians to build relationships with people of other faiths or beliefs. It is needed to promote mutual understanding and to work together for the common good in the development of society. Therefore, the Church of Sweden, in Sweden and internationally, through Act Church of Sweden, also cooperates with churches from traditions other than the Evangelical Lutheran, with faith-based organisations of other religious traditions and with secular organisations. When polarising forces tear apart the fabric of society, ecumenical and interreligious work becomes even more urgent.

As individuals and congregations, we must pray for and work for Act Church of Sweden and its partners around the world to be tools in God's mission, by serving humanity so that God's love for the whole world is expressed, regardless of people's faith, tradition or other differences.²

Act Church of Sweden's humanitarian response and long-term development cooperation always have human rights as a basis. The belief that all human beings are created in the image of God is in line with their starting point: all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. There is still an enormous amount of work to be done to realise these rights in practice!

We receive support and inspiration from partners and people, who in local and national contexts, take responsibility for the safety and livelihood of their fellow human beings and bravely stand up for human rights. Their courage and perseverance both strengthen and encourage us.

The words of the apostle Paul unite across many boundaries: "Do not lag in zeal [...] Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer."³ Let us have a burning commitment to the Act of the Church of Sweden in prayer and worship, in information and the collection of money.

Together in the worldwide Church, we can really make a difference!

Antje Jackelén
Archbishop, Church of Sweden

1. WHO WE ARE

This chapter describes the Church of Sweden's identity and governing values.

Act Church of Sweden's mission is to, for the sake of life and us together in the worldwide church, share the Gospel in words and deeds, defend human dignity, safeguard the Creation and live in faith, hope and love.

Act Church of Sweden is the branch for international mission and diaconia of Church of Sweden and thus constitutes its international aid and development work. This means that Act Church of Sweden is a faith-based development and aid actor and an integral part of the Church of Sweden. Act Church of Sweden's work has theological foundations⁴, at the same time as it is conducted in accordance with accepted principles for effective development cooperation and humanitarian work, such as the humanitarian principles, a gender-integrated human rights-based approach (HRBA), the Busan declaration⁵ principles for effective development cooperation, the Istanbul principles⁶, measures within the Charter for Change⁷ to strengthen the role of local actors in humanitarian work as well as the Core Humanitarian Standards for quality and accountability⁸ (CHS). Act Church of Sweden works holistically in accordance with the UN's agenda for sustainable development – Agenda 2030⁹.

Act Church of Sweden is part of a worldwide community and is borne by the belief in a God who takes a stand for those who are marginalised or live in poverty, and where faith, life, burdens and experiences are shared. Each person is created in the image of God, and human dignity is inviolable. Human beings are rights holders, not needy objects. This challenges us to confirm and strengthen people's own capabilities, responsibilities, and participation. Act Church of Sweden has a particular responsibility to respond to the global challenges of our time, in mutual cooperation with churches and ecumenical organisations.

Together with churches, civil society organisations and thousands of volunteers, Act Church of Sweden therefore works long-term against poverty, oppression and injustice and acts quickly in the event of humanitarian disasters. The work springs from the engagement of congregations as an expression of being part of a global movement and a worldwide church that we both influence and are affected by. Our work is mainly financed by funds raised from private donors, congregations, and institutional donors.

Act Church of Sweden's work with international diaconia and mission has its roots in both the Church of Sweden's mission (1874) and in Church of Sweden Aid (1948). Our history goes

back further than that of most other aid and development actors, which has provided important lessons and perspectives. The mission spread both knowledge of, and commitment to, people in other parts of the world and their living conditions early on. The Church of Sweden's understanding of the mission has developed over the past century. Nowadays, we act and reflect on the mission based on a postcolonial awareness.

1.1 INTERNATIONAL MISSION AND DIACONIA

The Church exists as a community sent by God with the mission to, in imitation of Jesus, make God's love visible in the world. We share this mandate with other churches and want to perform it in mutual partnership and togetherness. The theological idea of *Missio Dei* (God's Mission) emphasises that the work involves participating in God's mission, "God's work in the world"¹⁰. This idea also clarifies the mutual partnership in our work. Act Church of Sweden and our sister churches and faith-based partners participate jointly in God's mission, which by its nature is cross-border, local and worldwide at the same time. The work is based on a belief that "the church is called and sent to share God's care for the whole world, God's mission: our participation in God's quest to make Creation whole in all its relationships"¹¹. God's mission can also be explained as "...through our words and deeds – recognising and strengthening the forces of good in the world and fighting against unjust power structures"¹². As part of a worldwide church, Act Church of Sweden therefore has a role beyond the provision of financial resources. Transformative work must be defined and owned by the people it affects. This means that we see a shift in resources and power to local actors as part of the mission to live the gospel and to participate mutually and in partnership in God's mission.

With the belief in the Triune God and with the Bible as the source shared by all, the actors in the ecumenical movement have a common ground. The pursuit of unity is conducted in theological doctrinal issues but also in ethical issues that relate to the world and all of humanity. Relationships between churches are not dependent on common opinions, but they challenge and make it possible to deal with differences of opinion and conflicts. As part of the global ecumenical movement, Act Church of Sweden also affirms the call to build relationships with people of other faiths or beliefs to promote a deeper and mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the common good. We therefore cooperate with churches from traditions other than the Lutheran, faith-based organisations with a different religious background as well as secular organisations.

Part of God's mission is diaconia (Greek *service*), which is the Church's mission to serve humanity so that God's love is expressed towards all people, regardless of faith, tradition or value. It is an integral and inalienable part of the Church's identity and mission in local as well as global contexts. In global ecumenical contexts, the term "ecumenical diaconia" is used for humanitarian work as well as for development cooperation. Ecumenical diaconia is a faith and rights-based social act, rooted in socio-political knowledge and analysis. Therefore, ecumenical diaconal actors refer to both religious and secular concepts when explaining our work and its goals. In ecumenical diaconia, the special capacity of the churches is expressed where different parties work together to achieve common goals; local churches, diaconal and theological institutions and organisations, as well as international actors contribute their resources. The special capacity of ecumenical diaconal actors consists, for example, of contextual theological reflection that includes issues such as human dignity and restoration as well as experiences of vulnerability and healing, own educational and health care institutions, broad international networks, as well as thematic and aid-specific competence.

1.2 GOVERNING VALUES

Act Church of Sweden's identity and work are based on a life-empowering theology that is relevant to people's life situation and on an understanding that God in Christ shares human joy and sorrow, fights against everything that breaks down and opens the way to a living hope. People are created creative with the ability to take responsibility and contribute to change. The work is grounded in theological reflection, rooted in the tradition we are part of and based on what it means to be a church in our time. The work rests on a number of values that guide and shape our way of working and our collaborative relationships at the local, national and global level.

1.2.1 FAITH AS A DRIVING FORCE

Faith gives us, and many of the individuals, sister churches and organisations we work with, inspiration, courage and strength to take a stand for people who live under threat, are silenced or live in poverty, and for what promotes life and hope for the future.

Religion has power and influence over people's feelings, thoughts and actions and can be a positive or negative force. Faith and religious beliefs can guide, liberate and comfort people as well as create responsibility for one's own life, society and creation. Faith and religious beliefs can also oppress and stigmatise people and exploit people's vulnerability. We want to promote beliefs and faith-based actions that contribute to the positive power of religion for human dignity and the development of society.

1.2.2 ECUMENICAL APPROACH

For Act Church of Sweden, ecumenical cooperation is part of our identity. The term ecumenism comes from the Greek word *oikoumene*, which means *the whole inhabited world*. The word *oikos* means *house*, with the same word stem as econo-

mics and ecology. Thus, ecumenism can also be interpreted as the common housekeeping in relation to humanity's major issues, such as peace, justice and the integrity of Creation. The strong ecumenical identity is expressed through membership in the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together). Together, we share faith, mission and experiences, and contribute with different abilities and resources. As different parts of the same body, the ecumenical family is mutually dependent and jointly responsible for each other. The global ecumenical alliances also meet the challenges facing the world. Act Church of Sweden engages in these with the conviction that acting in joint testimony and service belongs to our identity as a church and that the multilateral cooperation are of strategic importance to achieve results.

The ecumenical approach is a guide for all Act Church of Sweden's programmes, and Act Church of Sweden works together with ecumenical partners and interfaith organisations, which are committed to working in a spirit of ecumenical diaconia.

1.2.3 THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

God's Creation is constantly renewed, and all life lives in mutual dependence. Human beings hold a unique position, when it comes to taking responsibility and ensuring that life is not violated. Creation, and thus the long-term survival of humankind, is threatened by people's current impact on our planet. The world is in a planetary emergency, and the planet's ability to feed and carry humans and other species are being exceeded. This is largely due to the fact that the world's population – mainly the richest parts of it – use resources in an unsustainable way. The knowledge we have today does not allow us to postpone until tomorrow what needs to be done today. Our impact on the climate must be radically reduced for the sake of the earth and humanity. We base our commitment to the integrity of Creation on theological reflection¹³ and available knowledge and research.

The transformation that is needed is demanding but can also mean positive changes and increased quality of life, and it must have a clear justice perspective. International solidarity between people and states is being challenged. Those who have contributed the least to the critical situation are hit the hardest in several ways, not least children, young people and future generations. We want to promote a sustainable development, where no one is left behind and people take responsibility for their lifestyle and its impact on nature, the climate and the environment. Agenda 2030 emphasises that sustainable development includes economic, social and ecological development.

1.2.4 HUMAN RIGHTS

Based on situations where lives are threatened and people are silenced, we take a stand for what promotes life and hope for the future. To make this visible, both analysis of the surrounding world and intersectional analysis of power are required, which interact with the theological reflection. It is a contex-

tually conscious theology that emphasises the importance of practice and the life lived here and now.

In our theological understanding, every person is created in God's image, with the right to a life of dignity and to basic rights, as expressed in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights conventions. This is also confirmed in Agenda 2030, which is guided by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, including respect for international law¹⁴. Everyone, without distinction of any kind, is entitled to all human rights. Discrimination is unacceptable, and no one must be left behind.

Human rights are the starting point for our work, which is evident from the gender-integrated and human rights-based approach in our development work and policy dialogue. A human rights-based approach is a method of realising human rights. The two main actors in this work are rights holders and duty bearers. The basic premise of human rights is that all human beings are free and equal in value and rights. This means that all people are rights holders and shall be given space for their own development and taking responsibility. States and their representatives are the duty bearers within the human rights system. Ultimately, they have a responsibility to protect, respect and uphold human rights. Children hold a special position in the Christian faith and their human rights shall be respected, protected, and safeguarded as an integral part of all our work.

The humanitarian work aims to save lives, alleviate suffering, and uphold the inherent value of every human being. It is a work that takes place both in situations of natural disasters and in refugee situations due to armed conflict or political repression. Human rights apply in humanitarian situations, and in the event of armed conflict, international humanitarian law also applies.

1.2.5 EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION

We believe in people's inherent ability and agency. Participation is fundamental for people's ability to be key actors in their own and in society's development. People's own perspectives, living conditions and long-term development come into focus through meaningful participation. Promoting local ownership and methods to increase people's empowerment and participation is therefore an important part of Act Church of Sweden's work.

Gender justice and equality are closely linked to power and the ability to participate and are vital for the assurance of human rights. Act Church of Sweden, therefore, integrates a gender and equality perspective and works to counter discriminatory structures in our work and the work of others. Inclusion and conditions for active participation for women, young people and other excluded groups are crucial for sustainable development and just peace. We support increased empowerment and participation for groups and individuals living in vulnerability. This means that privileged groups and individuals need to share the power they have.

1.2.6 DEMOCRATIC SPACE AND ORGANISATION

To enable individuals and society to demand economic, ecological, social, and political accountability, democratic space is essential. The space for civil society is a key issue for the development of a democratic society. We therefore work to safeguard, protect, and expand the democratic space for civil society and individuals working for human rights.

When people act together and organise themselves, in unison, they have greater opportunities to advance their ideas and demand their rights. The fact that people have the opportunity to mobilise and organise themselves, both in the digital and in the physical space, is therefore central to a well-functioning human rights-based work. Therefore, increased organisation and strengthening of organisations in civil society shall always be the aim of the work that Act Church of Sweden supports.

1.2.7 ACCOUNTABILITY

The experiences of the life we live affect our theology and interpretation of the Bible. Theology and the Bible's texts, in turn, challenges each society and ideological structure. This means that there is a mutual relationship between theology and practice. Faith and actions are connected and should be able to lead to change. Our understanding of the Christian faith calls us to address abuses of power, challenge oppression and inequality, and demand accountability, both in our own contexts and in the public sphere.

In order for human rights to be protected, respected and fulfilled, states and other actors, including religious actors, need to be held accountable for their actions, both politically and legally. People's ability to demand accountability is a necessary part of human rights-based work. It is part of our mission to identify and act against power structures that prevent people from living a full life, whether the structures exist in society, within the church or within development aid. It also means holding ourselves accountable for the commitments we make and being the change we want to see in the world.

2. WHAT WE WANT

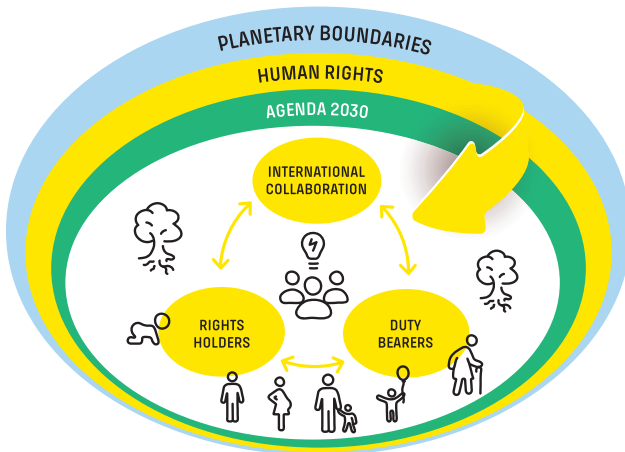
This chapter describes Act Church of Sweden's vision and goals as well as our overall theory of change.

2.1 VISION AND GOAL

Act Church of Sweden has a vision that points to the realm of God, the loving world that can both shine within us and take shape in our midst, and as a future we hope for and strive for⁵. Our vision is *life in the realm of God – a healed Creation and humanity as one, together with justice, freedom and peace*.

Act Church of Sweden's strategic goal is *people living in just, sustainable, and democratic communities, backed by global solidarity and based on human rights*. The image below is a schematic sketch that reflects the human rights-based and democratic order we want to promote, locally and globally, for just and sustainable development.

BILD: THE HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED ORDER THAT ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN WANTS TO PROMOTE



2.2 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN A CONTRADICTIONARY TIME

UN member states have agreed on global goals within Agenda 2030 for sustainable development. At the time when Act Church of Sweden formulates this strategic plan in 2021, the world is facing major changes and challenges, not least due to the ongoing Corona pandemic and climate crisis, which affect both the conditions for fulfilment of Agenda 2030 as a starting point and the conditions for our vision and goals.

We live in a time marked by contradictions: hope and mistrust, the longing for freedom and repression, openness, and se-

clusion. Trends give rise to counter trends: intensified globalisation and connection but also growing polarisation and isolationism, improved educational opportunities but also growing scepticism towards science, a huge increase in available information but also of misleading political propaganda and misinformation. The reality we live in is an ever-changing state that is characterised more by complex "both and" than simple "either or". It is in this contradictory and challenging field of tension that we are called to participate in God's mission for a healed world.

To highlight opportunities and challenges to the vision, goals, and the human rights order that we want to promote, a continuous analysis of the world around us is required. This shall include context and power dynamics, as well as risks and opportunities, and consider global, regional, and local levels, and their interconnections.

The Church of Sweden's analysis unit publishes an annual world report that forms the basis for our strategy and planning of our work. From the report published in 2021, we want to highlight the following overarching and converging global events – challenges and changes – which clearly affect the direction of the present strategy, and which need to be further analysed in the relevant context, together with other factors and opportunities for goal fulfilment.

- **The impact of the Corona pandemic on all parts of society** and the conditions for sustainable development, including democratic space, gender justice and equality.
- **Accelerating climate change, with rising global average temperatures and an alarming loss of the earth's biodiversity.** Environmental issues in general and the climate issue in particular are inseparable parts of all the other challenges facing humanity.
- **We are at a global demographic turning point with the youngest population in history.** Forty-two per cent are under the age of 25, and the number of older people, especially in Europe, will increase sharply, while the proportion of people of working age will grow, especially in Africa and Asia.
- **Humanitarian needs are increasing and, above all, conflicts, but climate change is also continuing to drive people to flee.** In total, about 80 million people in the world have been forced to flee their homes, the highest number ever. At the same time, humanitarian

needs have increased sharply, with the number of people in need of humanitarian response reaching over 270 million during the pandemic. Many crises are due to a combination of natural disasters, conflicts and underlying long-term root causes.

- **The democratic development in the world continues to decline, and in more countries than ever before, democracy is on the decline.** Democratic restrictions take place, for example, in the form of the judiciary being increasingly manipulated into a political instrument of control, and civil society organisations around the world are fighting against censorship, harassment and threats of violence. Democratic space has shrunk further during the pandemic with new laws and regulations restricting political opposition, the media and civil society. Among the most vulnerable actors in civil society are organisations that work for gender equality and gender justice, as well as defenders of the environment and human rights. More than three quarters of the world's population also live in countries where freedom of religion and belief is severely restricted by the state or have high levels of social conflict related to religion such as hate crimes, mob violence or religion-related terrorism.
- **Technology development and globalisation are driven forward by a complex interplay of technological, political, economic and social factors.** Globally, technological progress has contributed to increasing people's standard of living and life expectancy. There are great hopes that technology will be able to address the problems and challenges of the future. The digital development, accelerated by the pandemic, opens up new opportunities for people who have not previously had access to information or the opportunity to participate on equal terms. At the same time, there are signs that the digital divide between different groups is widening rather than shrinking. Access to modern information and communication technology is unevenly distributed around the world. There are also increased risks with technology development and digitisation, including the handling of personal data and sensitive information.
- **Active undermining of trust in science and the media has given energy to populist and anti-democratic rhetoric around the world and may have repercussions for decades to come.** In addition, polarisation between groups is increasing, as is the distance between political parties and citizens in many societies around the world. The polarisation becomes particularly clear on issues related to migration and integration policy, gender equality and the rights of LGBTIQ people.
- **Opposition towards gender equality, the rights of women and girls and LGBTIQ people, as well as towards**

sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is growing. In many countries, discrimination on the grounds of sex is regulated by traditional and religious family law, which governs women's limited right to get a divorce, inheritance and other financial assets. Strong traditional and social norms also mean that the rights of women, girls and LGBTIQ people – albeit formally regulated by law – are not respected. In the wake of the corona pandemic, the economic and social vulnerability of women and girls has intensified, and violence in close relationships has increased.

- **Young people lead demonstrations for climate, human rights and democracy.** In a time of growing authoritarianism, protests are also growing. Repression breeds the desire for freedom, not least among young people, which may herald major changes in the future as the world today has the youngest population in a long time.
- **Despite increased needs, there is a risk that global aid will decline sharply as a result of lower or negative growth in many donor countries, as well as a risk that countries in economic crisis will choose to prioritise domestic needs.** In 2019, global development aid decreased from 0.31 to 0.30 per cent of donor countries' GNI, which is far from the 0.7 per cent commitment. At the same time, there is strong support in many countries, including Sweden, for comprehensive aid and support for multilateral regulations and institutions to meet the global challenges.

Churches and faith-based organisations generally have a great responsibility for, and have unique opportunities, to build bridges at the local, regional, and global levels because they exist at all levels of society and have global forms of organisation. Act Church of Sweden understands its surroundings based on a church and ecumenical identity with long experience and base in a faith and rights-based movement for global justice and solidarity. In addition to the global events highlighted from the Church of Sweden's report, we especially want to highlight the role of religious actors in just and sustainable development and the importance of increased localisation and shift of power for future development aid.

- **In a world where people largely define themselves as religious, churches and other faith-based organisations are crucial for sustainable development cooperation.** In large parts of the world, religious actors account for a large share of social security through community services such as education and health care, and in connection with disasters, religious institutions often serve as vital centres for both rescue work and psychosocial support. Faith-based actors may, in some areas, be the only institution that is locally present. In many contexts, formal and informal religious leaders as well as religious institutions have the highest confidence of the population and influence opinions and behaviour.

- **Delays in the implementation of international commitments to transfer power over development aid resources.** The international community agreed in 2016 that at least 25% of humanitarian aid should go to national and local actors by 2020. This has not happened, although some progress can be noted¹⁶. In 2021, the OECD adopted a new binding recommendation for its member states to ensure increased local ownership and to shift power and resources in the aid provided in cooperation with civil society. To enable this, the international aid sector needs to come to terms with postcolonial and unjust structures that prevent the local actors from having power and access to resources. This requires a change, also in Act Church of Sweden, which, to a much greater extent, is based on genuine reciprocity and utilises complementary roles in the collaborative work.

2.3 ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN'S THEORY OF CHANGE AND CONTRIBUTION

Act Church of Sweden's activities focus on the resilience of communities and the special conditions needed to achieve gender-integrated and human rights-based justice, sustainability, and democracy. People's lives take place in relation to a whole range of possibilities and constraints that are affected by economic, social, legal, religious, political, and cultural frameworks, locally and globally. Based on the realities and abilities of people and local actors, Act Church of Sweden's activities shall therefore be shaped in a way that contributes to shifting power and resources to local actors and that consciously holds together and promotes synergies between different thematic perspectives and between humanitarian, development, and peace work.

2.3.1 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Act Church of Sweden's identity and vision, together with the analysis of the world around us, shape our priorities in six integrated thematic areas: Theology and development, Just peace, Fair and sustainable livelihoods, Gender justice and gender equality, SRHR, and Resilience. It is in these areas that we believe that Act Church of Sweden and its partners can make the biggest difference together. Through long-term and theologically grounded work with peace, livelihood, and humanitarian efforts within the ecumenical movement and with many partners, there is solid knowledge to build on. In a global context, the Church of Sweden's positions on gender equality, gender justice and SRHR are unusual for a religious institution. This experience has motivated Act Church of Sweden to develop perspectives and methods for dialogue and change with regard to issues characterised by value conflicts. The methods are well rooted in human rights as well as in our theological interpretation. All in all, it provides the conditions for holistic work to strengthen the resilience of people and local communities, i.e. the long-term ability to handle change and continue to develop.

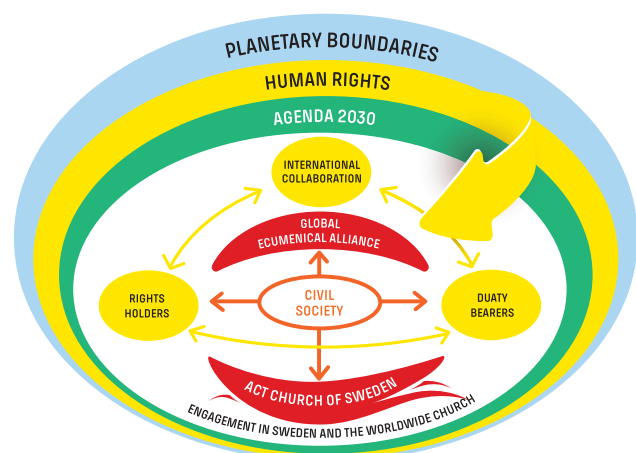
Act Church of Sweden primarily strives to empower people and their local and global organisation, in close cooperation with religious and human rights-based civil society actors. This is done with the aim that they, as rights holders, should have the democratic space to engage in dialogue with duty bearers regarding their responsibility to defend and fulfil human rights and contribute to just and sustainable development.

Act Church of Sweden identifies eight strategic objectives for the work:

- Development within the planetary boundaries.
- People's right not to be discriminated against on the basis of gender is realised in church and society.
- People's right to freedom of religion or belief is realised in church and society.
- People's right to bodily and sexual integrity is realised in church and society.
- People's sexual and reproductive health and rights are realised.
- People's right to inclusive participation and safety is realised.
- People's right to sustainable livelihoods is realised.
- People's right to life and dignity in humanitarian crisis is realised.

The image below visualises Act Church of Sweden's contribution to the realisation of the human rights-based order that Act Church of Sweden wants to promote. It emphasises the key role of civil society and the need for a systemic approach to achieving just, sustainable and democratic communities, backed by global solidarity and based on human rights.

IMAGE: ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED ORDER



2.3.2 CONDITIONS FOR THE GOALS TO BE REALISED

In order for the goals to be realised, Act Church of Sweden's work focus on eleven crucial *conditions*. These guide our overall monitoring of results and performance.

- *People in churches have the opportunity and ability to interpret the church's mission, and contribute to the realisation of human rights in church and society*

Faith can be a positive force for change at both the individual and societal levels. Act Church of Sweden engages in the work for change, together with churches and religious actors throughout the world. It is a mutual work that contributes to increasing people's capability and influence to formulate, express and practise their faith and contribute to the church and religious actors being relevant in their present time and context. Respect for freedom of religion or belief as well as inter-religious collaboration for sustainable development can both counteract religious polarisation and extremism and promote peaceful and pluralistic societies.

Religious actors influence values and play a crucial role in social cohesion and trust. Thus, theological formation is not only important for the churches internally, but it shapes and influences society. By understanding the connection between theology, diaconia, human rights and sustainable development, churches can better fulfil their mandate and social responsibility. Theological education is therefore an important condition for the churches to be able to carry out their mandate in a credible and powerful way. There is a need for educational institutions for theological education of good academic quality, which constitute safe and creative learning environments for both women and men¹⁷.

- *People have the opportunity to organise themselves and demand ecological, economic, social and political accountability*

The space and organisation of civil society is a key issue for the development of a democratic society. Act Church of Sweden therefore works to safeguard, protect and expand the democratic space for civil society and individuals who defend human rights. Well-functioning democratic societies shall ensure people's equal opportunity for active participation in society. Act Church of Sweden wants to cooperate with local actors in order to strengthen local action, social cohesion, and link it to long-term conditions for people to organise, take charge of their situation, make their voices heard, and participate in social and economic development as well as demand their human rights and climate justice.

- *People and communities have strengthened resilience, power and resources to manage, recover from and minimise the effects of crises and disasters, including the consequences of the climate crisis*

Local participation and ownership in planning, governance and implementation are central to effective and relevant humanitarian work. Act Church of Sweden has a holistic view of sustainable development and wants to change the traditional structure in international development aid by integrating humanitarian work with long-term development and peace-building initiatives, what in development aid is called triple-nexus. In addition to the task of saving lives, alleviating suffering and upholding dignity, our commitment aims to strengthen resilience in humanitarian situations and accountability to people and societies affected by the crisis. In particular, we want to promote the local actors' capacity and opportunities to take action for protection, survival and recovery in humanitarian work, and to work for the people who live in the place where the disaster occurs to have power over the work. In contexts where there is a lack of respect for the access of humanitarian actors, the need for good coordination for effective humanitarian financing, response and disaster risk management increases. Through policy dialogue, we contribute to addressing the root causes of humanitarian disasters and expand the humanitarian space to work and reform the humanitarian system towards a more equal distribution of power and resources.

Climate change further exacerbates the vulnerabilities of people and communities. We want to contribute so that climate changes are met by actions that prevent natural disasters and increase the resilience and ownership among people and local communities¹⁸. A general climate adaptation of methods, working methods, financing and advocacy work is required at all levels.

- *People and communities have increased safety, ability, and empowerment to prevent and manage conflicts as well as participate in peace and reconciliation processes*

Religious actors are important norm bearers, and ecumenical and inter-religious cooperation is of great importance for trust and social cohesion, not least in peace and reconciliation processes. Strengthening people's safety, opportunities and empowerment to participate in democratic processes and claim their human rights is an important part of Act Church of Sweden's work for peace. Peace processes must be based on international law, which includes human rights and international humanitarian law, and contribute to strengthening individuals' and local communities' coping mechanisms and resilience. Act Church of Sweden works to ensure that women and young people are included in decision-making processes in conflict situations because it is their right and because it enables sustainable and just peace.

Conflicts are often fuelled by economic or social injustices, and division is reinforced by the fact that parties to the conflict use group affiliation to create images of enemies. This can be, for example, connected to religious or ethnic affiliation, people's gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression or an individual's civil status. Migrant workers and refugees are often particularly vulnerable.

There is a disturbing polarisation and violent extremism. The current religious context therefore needs to be included in peace and conflict analyses. As a faith-based actor, Act Church of Sweden has a special opportunity to contribute to the respect for freedom of religion or belief, inter-religious collaboration for sustainable development that counteracts religious polarisation and extremism as well as contributes to peaceful and pluralistic societies.

- *Religious actors are an active part of civil society, collaborate and play a constructive and challenging role for human rights, peace and sustainable development*

Our faith calls on us to address abuses of power, challenge oppression and demand accountability. Act Church of Sweden sees a clear role for churches and other religious actors, such as religious leaders and faith-based organisations, in the work to make people stronger as active participants and rights holders in their faith communities and society as a whole. Act Church of Sweden wants to utilise the potential of churches and other religious actors to contribute to positive change, and therefore integrates a conscious approach to religion and religious actors in our work. We want to support the work of churches and them as actors in the realisation of human rights and the global goals for sustainable development. To contribute constructively to the development of society, leaders and theologians are needed to interpret current times on the basis of a theology that induce dialogue with its social context, integrate human rights in theological reflection and demand accountability in its own constituencies and in the public space.

- *Duty bearers and religious representatives promote changes to laws, norms and practices for people, regardless of gender, to have opportunities for equal participation, voice and leadership in church and society*

Empowerment, participation and transforming power relations are necessary for just, sustainable, and democratic societal development. Lack of equality is a widespread problem and a violation of human rights. It exacerbates poverty, hunger, health problems and hampers sustainable economic development. Social, religious, and cultural norms and practices prevent women and girls from fully participating as members of society and create difficulties for them in gaining access to important social and economic rights, such as education, health care, land and financial services. Destructive norms that link masculinity with power, violence, sexuality, and alcohol use have negative consequences for development

and human security at the societal, organisational and individual levels. Based on the principle that everyone should have democratic opportunities and power to shape society, the church and their own lives, Act Church of Sweden works for gender justice and takes a clear stand against injustices due to gender, sexual orientation or gender identity.

- *Duty bearers and religious actors stand against gender-based violence and sexual violence, both in armed conflict and in peace*

Religious actors are particularly important norm bearers in relation to gender, sexuality, and family formation. Act Church of Sweden wants to combat all forms of sexual and gender-related violence and work to ensure that leaders and representatives of churches and church-related organisations take decisive action in this matter. Sexual and gender-related violence is an increasing global problem that is encountered in all countries, within all religions, and in all social classes and structures of society.

- *Duty bearers and religious representatives guarantee people's access to sexual and reproductive health services and knowledge, in order for people to make informed decisions concerning their own body, sexuality, cohabitation and reproduction*

Non-discrimination is necessary for the realisation of human rights, and religious actors are particularly important norm bearers in relation to gender, sexuality, and family planning. While states have the primary responsibility for providing access to health care and social security, religious actors in many countries are central in the direct implementation of education and health care. It entails a great deal of responsibility, and an opportunity to provide non-discriminatory care, advice and support to individuals who are in vulnerable situations.

Act Church of Sweden emphasises the positive value of human sexuality and works to ensure that sexual and reproductive rights are realised. We oppose cultural and religious norms and practices that are detrimental to the physical integrity of individuals. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are crucial for people's power over their bodies, sexuality, and life. Rights include the right to decide over one's own body, sexuality, co-habitation, reproduction and to have access to critical SRH care. Act Church of Sweden wants to work for improved access to sexual and reproductive health services, including maternity care, preventive healthcare for women and children, access to contraception, prevention and care for sexually transmitted diseases including HIV, safe and legal abortions as well as comprehensive sexuality education.

- *Duty bearers guarantee people's access to sustainable livelihoods and social protection*

People's ability to earn a living is the foundation for the fulfilment of many of the human rights. All people have the right

to a dignified life and a fair standard of living. A sustainable livelihood that makes a fair standard of living possible is based partly on one's own or relatives' work, and partly on the social security that all states are responsible for providing. Act Church of Sweden wants to work for states, individually and through international cooperation, to take their responsibility to realise all people's right to a fair standard of living. Churches and other civil society actors have, not least based on their long experience of providing welfare services, an important role in driving the development of publicly funded welfare forward, without replacing state responsibility.

Act Church of Sweden wants to work to ensure that companies respect human rights and contribute to the realisation of the global sustainability goals. States are responsible for protecting people by ensuring that companies act responsibly and by providing opportunities for victims of abuse to receive compensation. The empowerment of people, not least women and young people, grows if we contribute to sustainable and inclusive value chains and production conditions. The work with sustainable production is further strengthened through work in Sweden with sustainable consumption.

- *Duty bearers carry out climate measures and financing in accordance with agreed frameworks and national action plans*

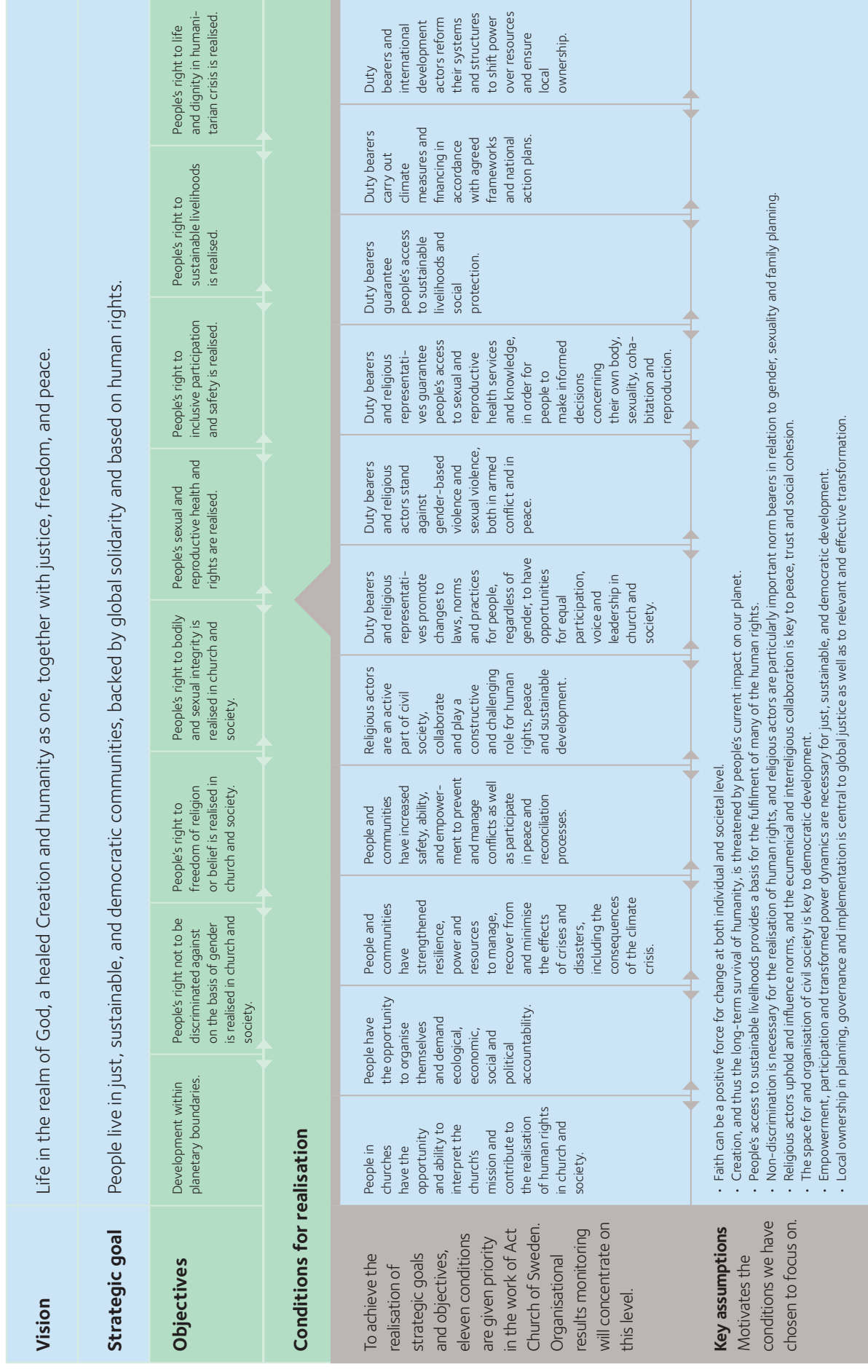
The Creation, and thus the long-term survival of humankind, is threatened by people's current impact on our planet. Children and young people around the world are mobilising to hold the adult world accountable for unsustainable development

that deprives them of their future. Act Church of Sweden is part of a global movement that demands accountability for ensuring environmental and climate justice. We work for states to take just, gender-integrated and ambitious climate measures that live up to global agreements for the environment and climate and the global goals for sustainable development, and to strengthen the protection of environmental and climate defenders. We want to work to ensure that societies and people affected by the consequences of the climate crisis have the right to influence decisions concerning adaptation and climate financing, and to be compensated for losses and damage as a result of natural disasters.

- *Duty bearers and international development actors reform their systems and structures to shift power over resources and ensure local ownership*

The world is characterised by an unfair distribution of power and resources, which is also reflected in development aid. Act Church of Sweden's experiences of international mission and joint reflection in the global ecumenical movement⁹⁹ equip us to critically examine the system that we ourselves are a part of. There is a lag in the implementation of reforming mechanisms to shift power over development aid resources. Local ownership in planning, governance and implementation is crucial for global justice and relevant and effective change work. Act Church of Sweden therefore works systematically to let go of power and resources and reconsider our role in relation to ecumenical and local cooperation actors as well as challenge duty bearers and international development actors to change.

ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN'S THEORY OF CHANGE



The contributions of Act Church of Sweden

	Mobilisation	Capacity development	Collaboration	Advocacy
Strategic working methods to promote focused conditions based on six integrated thematic areas: <i>Theology and development, Just Peace, Fair and sustainable livelihoods, Gender justice and gender equality, SRHR, and Resilience.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For increased awareness of Act Church of Sweden's work together with partners and its results. For increased commitment and resources for Act Church of Sweden's and our partners' work from private individuals, congregations, and institutional donors. To strengthen platforms within Act Church of Sweden for a global justice movement. Of public opinion for global justice with a special focus on climate justice. Of public opinion for strong Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian aid. To strengthen popular education in global justice issues with a focus on climate justice, gender justice and the role of religious actors in development. For regional presence in programme countries and to be a relevant and effective channel between institutional financiers, Swedish local involvement, and local communities globally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For increased capacity of churches and church leaders to reconcile theology, diaconia and human rights. For gender conscious and equal leadership of our partners. For increased organisational capacity in quality and accountability as well as internal management and control of partner organisation. For increased capacity of partner organisations to integrate risk, environmental analysis and conflict sensitivity in their operations. For increased capacity of local religious healthcare and educational institutions to deliver comprehensive SRHR-related healthcare and education. For increased capacity of churches and local actors to strengthen resilience in communities affected by crisis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theological exchanges and ecumenical cooperation for trusting and constructive discussions about what unites us as well as value-differences. Interreligious cooperation for a deeper and mutual understanding, which counteracts religious polarisation and extremism. For mutual learning between local faith-based actors and local human rights actors. For capacity sharing between local organisations in the programmes, including local resource organisations in specific thematic areas. For common standards and guidelines for effective and responsible implementation of humanitarian, development, and peace work. For coordination between humanitarian response and long-term development work. For increased cooperation and accountability between civil society, corporate actors and government actors for effective and sustainable development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To defend human rights and democratic values and principles. To draw attention to the current situation in regional contexts where Act Church of Sweden's partners operate. To counteract discriminatory and stigmatising norms, practices and legislation that restrict the implementation of gender equality and SRHR. For the international humanitarian community and global financiers to take their responsibility to redistribute power and resources to people and local communities affected by crisis. For climate measures and climate finance to be implemented. For strong, human rights-based and development-effective development policy and aid at the Swedish, European and global levels. For gender-inclusive, broad and general social protection and health systems that include SRHR.

Relations

The theory of change and contributions of Act Church of Sweden are based on a number of logical relations that are essential for good results. These relations are important monitoring and learning areas for the Act Church of Sweden programme development. They are found in *italics* in the third chapter of the strategic plan.

Challenges and possibilities

To identify challenges and possibilities for the vision, goals, and the human rights-based order that we want to promote, a continuous analysis of the world around us is required. This shall include context and power dynamics, as well as risks and opportunities, and consider global, regional, and local levels and their interconnections.

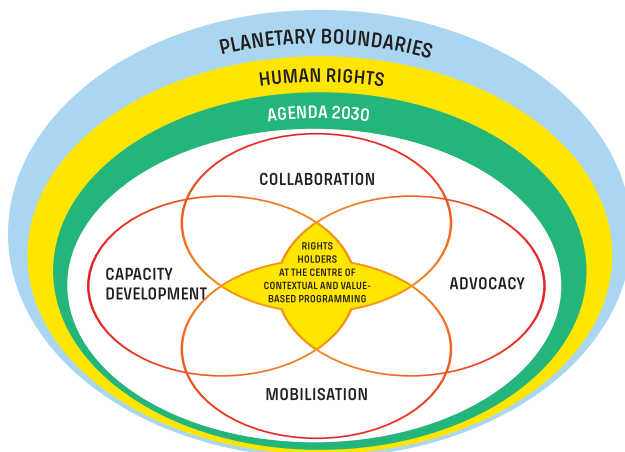
3. WHAT WE DO

This chapter describes Act Church of Sweden's strategic working methods and contribution to the realisation of the conditions and goals outlined in the theory of change.

We are carried by the Gospel about Jesus, who takes a stand for people in vulnerable situations, and who wants us to do for others what we want them to do for us²⁰. Our faith leads us to action, and together with people all over the world, we fight for every human being's right to a life of dignity.

Act Church of Sweden conducts its work in accordance with the guiding values, our goals and our commitments for quality and accountability. Together with partner organisations and ecumenical alliances, we contribute to human rights-based, just, sustainable and democratic development, and to churches and local actors having the conditions to be dynamic civil society actors who change their societies in a positive direction. Act Church of Sweden plans and manages most of its work through programmes. The programmes are described in strategic governing documents that set goals and priorities for Act Church of Sweden's contribution to change within specific areas of activity.

IMAGE: SCHEMATIC SKETCH OF THE INTERACTION OF ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN'S STRATEGIC WORKING METHODS



In our work, rights holders and local actors shall have access to information, know their rights, and have the power and resources to make decisions and participate in the work that affects their lives. We work with global ecumenical alliances and other partner organisations to develop good accountability mechanisms for our common stakeholders, including sharing expertise and resources in thematic areas, standards and methods

for managing and controlling humanitarian and long-term development activities. Act Church of Sweden is certified in accordance with CHS, HQAI-chs-2016-01²¹, which confirms that quality and accountability are reflected throughout the work.

Act Church of Sweden's commitments for quality and accountability are to:

1. Work with a human rights-based approach
2. Work gender integrated
3. Work for ecological sustainability
4. Work in partnership and reciprocity
5. Work openly, transparently and for participation
6. Contribute with efficient, results based, relevant and conflict-sensitive support
7. Handle complaints
8. Be a learning organisation
9. Support staff and competency
10. Follow ACT Alliance's Code of Good Practice for Members and the current Swedish requirements under the Swedish Fundraising Council, the Swedish Fundraising Control and the Swedish Public access to information principle

Act Church of Sweden's theory of change and contributions are based on a number of logical relations that are essential for good results. These relations are important evaluation and learning areas for Act Church of Sweden's operational development. This chapter presents a framework for how Act Church of Sweden shall operate and develop programmes within four overall strategic working methods – mobilisation, capacity development, collaboration, and advocacy.

3.1 MOBILISATION

Act Church of Sweden is based on people's involvement and drive for global solidarity. By mobilising resources and commitment to international development aid of good quality and with rights bearers at the centre, Act Church of Sweden contributes to the development of just, sustainable, and democratic communities. The work is based on some important relations that are found in *italics* in the text below.

3.1.1 COMMITMENT IN SWEDEN

Act Church of Sweden is largely carried by voluntarism and a strong local commitment. It is the interaction between local engagement in Sweden and churches and other grass-roots movements globally that gives us our mandate to carry out our work.

The international work is an integrated part of many dioceses and parishes, where the importance of working in solidarity with

our sister churches and other partners throughout the world is a day-to-day driving force and inspiration also at the local level. We want to encourage and broaden this commitment, and also increase the awareness of Act Church of Sweden's work both within the church and in Sweden in general. *To increase people's interest in Act Church of Sweden, they need to know that Act Church of Sweden exists and what work the organisation carries out.* The goal is to increase the commitment to Act Church of Sweden's work against global injustices and thereby contributing to a broader movement for change, locally and globally.

We strive to be a platform for people's willingness and drive for voluntarism through flexible forms of involvement and communication. In this way, we can contribute to meetings between people who want to turn faith into action, generate hope, take action for a more just world and inspire others to get involved. We work together to develop a movement for global justice by promoting active involvement in international affairs, among staff, volunteers, and members of the Church of Sweden, at the local and national level. *To mobilise commitment, there needs to be a clear platform that offers opportunities to act, and one also needs to feel that one is an important part of something bigger.* To be visible and participate in media and at different arenas are important to raise awareness of Act Church of Sweden and the perspectives of our partners. In the same way, through mobilisation of public opinion, we contribute to change in line with our advocacy issues, particularly with regard to Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

3.1.2 MOBILISING RESOURCES

Act Church of Sweden is supported by donations from congregations and individuals. Giving is a way of translating faith into action and an opportunity for participation and involvement in the work against global injustices. Knowledge and trust are vital for people's willingness to give and commitment to Act Church of Sweden's work. *To become committed, people need to know about the benefits that Act Church of Sweden contribute to, for rights holders, in order to meet the challenges that exist in the world. They also need to be moved by the messages and perceive Act Church of Sweden as a relevant, credible, and courageous actor.* Local commitment is also an important basis for financing the international work. In order to succeed in raising awareness, trust and involvement in Act Church of Sweden, our benefits and strengths need to be communicated. To support this communication, there is a brand plan, communication platform and guidelines. These documents help us to distinguish Act Church of Sweden from other actors in Sweden, to act internally as one organisation and give us direction for external communication.

To be credible and relevant in Sweden, not least within the Church of Sweden, Act Church of Sweden needs to demonstrate both knowledge of and experience from the countries where most of the work is carried out and be a link between those committed in Sweden and the rights holders we support. We need to communicate results, answer questions, and connect people globally. With presence in programme countries,

Act Church of Sweden can work closely together with people and local actors, and thus be the organisation that many in Sweden choose to support and get involved in..

To include new fundraising methods is crucial to create conditions for our work. The goal is to increase the number of congregations and individuals who donate money and time to Act Church of Sweden and thereby contribute to an even broader movement for change, locally and globally. *In order for the commitment to be long-term, confirmation is needed that what you do contributes to change and that you can be involved and influence the movement you are part of.* Therefore, feedback and relationship management are important as well as popular education on the role of religious actors in development. During the strategy period, the focus for the work with popular education will be climate justice, gender justice and the religious actors' role in development.

Act Church of Sweden also finances its work with funds from institutional donors such as Sida and Swedish embassies, the European Commission, and various foundations. Increased institutional funding is an important part of the realisation of Act Church of Sweden's goals within the framework of our governing values and commitments for quality and accountability. Consortiums is an important approach to be able to handle large grants. The ACT Alliance provides a wide range of possible cooperation, not least with local actors.

Act Church of Sweden intends to strengthen its presence in the regions where our programmes are implemented, in close collaboration with partners and the ACT forums. Staff in the regions will represent Act Church of Sweden, work in close dialogue with partners, develop and monitor the work, keep contact with embassies and other donors to, together with partners, reach funding that is available locally and regionally, as well as contribute to internal learning, information gathering and communication. Working together with partners to meet different donor requirements and ensuring good administration and quality at all levels is resource-intensive, and in many cases presupposes local registration. In line with the commitment to shift power and resources, Act Church of Sweden will work to ensure that resources are managed locally and eventually phase out our intermediary role in development aid.

3.2 CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Act Church of Sweden's theory of change is based on the power of local actors to act for human rights and human dignity in their context. Therefore, Act Church of Sweden in dialogue and mutual learning together with partners and rights holders shall contribute to processes where people, organisations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time²². The work is based on some important relations that are found in italics in the text below.

3.2.1 LOCAL OWNERSHIP

The ability and space of local civil society organisations to

work for human rights and human dignity based on their identities, mandates and roles are prerequisites for goal fulfilment in Act Church of Sweden's work and programmes. *By adopting a gender-integrated and human rights-based approach, the joint activities with rights holders can contribute to a democratic culture, respect for human rights, accountability, and non-discrimination, as well as increase the opportunities to identify and address injustices and challenges together with rights holders.*

Transformative work must be defined and owned by the people it affects locally; therefore, cooperation with local actors, not least local churches and faith-based organisations, is an important strategic approach to promote local action in Act Church of Sweden's programme. *But in order to realise the influence and leadership of local actors in humanitarian work and development cooperation, a change is required that concretely shifts power and resources from external to local organisations.*

Act Church of Sweden therefore needs, together with other North-based aid organisations, to relinquish power and resources and dare to reformulate our roles in relation to partners and local actors, as well as to challenge and do away with structural discrimination in our organisations. Act Church of Sweden will be an active partner and promote cooperation that is characterised by organisational independence and equality in the relationship, mutual respect and joint quality and accountability in accordance with the Istanbul Principles and Core Humanitarian Standards. Act Church of Sweden will accompany people²³ and partner organisations, facilitate good conditions for their operations and existence, challenge each other to develop and grow in our roles as well as mobilise resources and support for their cause.

The purpose of Act Church of Sweden's local presence shall always be to strengthen partnerships and local actors; therefore, cooperation with partners is always in focus. A main principle is not to establish expensive structures but to seek resource-efficient solutions. An important part will therefore be coordination with other members within the ACT Alliance.

3.2.2 ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

To promote sustainability and the shift of power and resources, Act Church of Sweden shall contribute to the capacity and ability of partner organisations to be relevant, effective, and quality-driven actors for change. This is done, among other things, by contributing to gender-conscious and equal leadership and participation. This is also done by enabling and maintaining good systems for quality and accountability as well as internal management and control. Together with churches and local actors we can implement more risk-aware, adaptable, and transformative work when we have good structures for accountability and transparency towards rights holders, and the capacity to integrate risk, environment and climate analysis as well as conflict sensitivity.

The active participation of religious actors in civil society and their constructive and challenging role in human rights, peace and sustainable development are important locally as well as globally. Therefore, Act

Church of Sweden shall promote the capacity of churches and faith-based local actors to work in accordance with the principles of a gender-integrated human rights-based approach. It includes the capacity of churches and their leaders to carry out their mandate on the basis of a contextually aware theology that emphasises the importance of practice and life lived here and now as well as the ability to unite theology, diaconia and human rights. This also applies to the capacity of local religious, healthcare, and educational institutions to deliver adequate SRHR-related healthcare and comprehensive sexuality education.

3.2.3 THEMATIC CAPACITY

Act Church of Sweden's theory of change rely on the capacity of churches and local actors to demand human rights for structurally vulnerable groups, such as indigenous peoples, women, young people, ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTQI people and people who are displaced. Act Church of Sweden has a holistic approach to capacity, and the partner dialogue defines opportunities for specific capacity building activities and mutual learning. This may be, for example, increased capacity to work towards change within thematic areas, expanded networks in relation to relevant actors or a strengthened role and participation in the civil society.

Religious actors play a pivotal role in values and in promoting social cohesion and trust. They have particular influence over norms concerning gender, family planning and sexuality. The Church of Sweden takes a clear stand for justice and against discrimination and stigmatisation due to gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity. *This gives Act Church of Sweden special opportunities to challenge and support religious actors to take an active and constructive role in changing discriminatory and stigmatising norms, laws and practices that limit just peace, equal participation in economic development and the realisation of gender justice and SRHR.* In conflict and crisis situations, when dividing lines are accentuated, Act Church of Sweden contributes to knowledge and the ability to relate to religious contexts and actors.

3.2.4 THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND REFLECTION

Theological education is the churches' tool for educating, supporting, and equipping people for various leadership assignments in the service of the church. *That church leaders are supported by a deep theological foundation and have a critical and self-critical approach in the interpretation of sacred texts, in the church's self-understanding and in its theological analysis of the present are also prerequisites for churches to play a constructive and challenging role in the public space and act as a relevant societal actor that develops values and social cohesion as well as trust*²⁴ Theological education and reflection refer to academic education, in-service education and popular education of religious leaders, employees and volunteers. It is part of the church's basic task as well as a method for attaining the objectives in the thematic areas and programmes.

Through education, new knowledge and learning is achieved from common reflection. Various types of in-service education

of leaders, including leadership and organisational development, for example, in churches, are also an important part of Act Church of Sweden's work. In recent years, theological tensions within and between different Lutheran churches in the world have increased, which is partly due to the churches' different views on Bible interpretation, Bible application, the view of denominational identity or in the fields of gender justice and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). It is with this background that the question of theological education is important for LWF's member churches.

3.3 COLLABORATION

Act Church of Sweden's ecumenical approach is based on the desire to collaborate and participate in designing conditions for sustainable development together. By contributing to platforms for exchange and dialogue, Act Church of Sweden can promote collaboration and coordination locally, regionally, and globally. The work is based on some important relations that are found in italics below.

3.3.1 LOCAL AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Act Church of Sweden is partner-based. This means that we work together with partners and not on our own. Act Church of Sweden's partner relationships are long-term, and cooperation with churches often has a historical basis and are built on long-term and open processes for mutual exchange and learning. Although the theological positions that the Church of Sweden has taken on gender justice, gender equality and SRHR are unusual in a global context, there are movements and groups within most churches and denominations that make similar theological interpretations. *In order for theological discussions about what unites us as well as value conflicts to be constructive, mutually thought-provoking and challenging, Act Church of Sweden needs to maintain long-term and trusting relationships with ecumenical partners and churches.*

Act Church of Sweden's faith-based partners have a long experience and deep contextual knowledge in peace work, which is part of the core of ecumenical and inter-religious work, and in livelihood and health issues that are strongly rooted in the diaconal work. As a church and human rights-based development and aid actor, Act Church of Sweden cooperates with religious institutions, faith-based organisations and secular human rights organisations and can contribute to building bridges, dialogue and cooperation in specific thematic areas.

To create conditions for trusting and constructive dialogue and cooperation, Act Church of Sweden together with the ecumenical movement shall confirm the call to build relationships with people of other faiths or beliefs, based on theological openness and freedom of religion and belief. In peace work, Act Church of Sweden promotes inter-religious cooperation for a deeper and mutual understanding, and for preventing religious radicalisation and extremism. In religiously complex and conflict-filled contexts, constructive inter-religious cooperation carries a peace-making power in

itself.

Global, regional and local challenges influence and reinforce each other, and relevant and effective local solutions often require regional analysis and collaboration. Act Church of Sweden's contribution in dialogue with partners is, among other things, to promote collaboration between local and regional organisations with a focus on structurally vulnerable groups and people who are displaced, gender justice, SRHR and climate justice. As an international actor, Act Church of Sweden can also enable the exchange of capacity and experiences within and between different regional contexts and the different programmes we work in.

3.3.2 GLOBAL COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

The Church of Sweden's membership in the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation as well as Act Church of Sweden's involvement in these organisations and membership in the ACT Alliance enables a broad and coordinated multilateral involvement in, among other things, advocacy, method and capacity development, theological education and ecumenical diaconia. Through WCC and LWF, conditions are created for collaboration, together with other member churches and church-related organisations, such as the Christian councils and aid organisations. Focus is the visible unity of churches, ecumenical theology, and work with various diaconal questions of justice and contributions to sustainable development²⁵.

LWF also carries out worldwide work with long-term development cooperation and humanitarian work. As a member of the WCC, LWF and ACT Alliance, we are influenced by the strategies of these organisations. Our work also contributes to the global processes that affect the design of strategies and practical cooperation. The common analysis and broad cooperation that come with membership provide breadth and depth, which reinforces our work. Together, we can develop common standards and guidelines for effective and responsible humanitarian work, development cooperation and peace work.

The ACT Alliance is one of the largest global faith-based alliances for humanitarian work, development work and advocacy. The ACT Alliance enables cooperation and coordination in the regions and countries where Act Church of Sweden works and includes members coordinating and contributing resources and their special competencies in joint capacity development. Act Church of Sweden works specifically to promote local coordination and local leadership in joint efforts and in local and regional forums for ACT members. In the humanitarian work, the ACT Alliance forms the main framework for partner cooperation. Effective policy dialogue work requires broad cooperation with organisations and networks at different levels of society. *In order to have a greater impact in political dialogue on development and humanitarian issues than when we act separately, Act Church of Sweden and our partners need to be active in multilateral ecumenical cooperation.* WCC, LWF and the ACT Alliance are particularly important actors for coordination and cooperation. All three organisations have ac-

creditation with the UN. This enables Act Church of Sweden and other churches and church-related organisations to link issues locally, nationally, regionally, and globally. The growing interest in religion and the role of religious actors in development issues, including Agenda 2030 and global Sustainable Development Goals, has increased the demand for the competencies of the WCC, LWF and the ACT Alliance from the international community.

Act Church of Sweden also promotes collaboration and accountability between civil society, corporate actors as well as government and other actors for efficient and sustainable development. Authorities and corporate actors are, on the one hand, objects to influence the work and, on the other hand, important actors to collaborate with for change. Therefore, Act Church of Sweden is included in several subject-specific networks and cooperates with actors that are relevant to what we want to achieve with the policy dialogue work.

3.3.3 COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS AND LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT WORK

In the world's acute and protracted crises, the immediate needs can often not be separated from the basic problems that need to be addressed in the long-term. This means that development and humanitarian actors need to coordinate their work to be relevant. *To strengthen people's and local communities' ability to manage, recover from, learn from and minimise the effects of crises, Act Church of Sweden needs to ensure that long-term development work and humanitarian work interact, are clearly rooted in local contexts and are based on local priorities.*

As part of the ACT alliance and as a faith-based actor with long experience of development and humanitarian work, the links between them are a clear part of the Church of Sweden's mandate and organisation. This is reinforced by the fact that Act Church of Sweden often works with the same partner and rights holder in both long-term development work and humanitarian crises. Act Church of Sweden has a special competence to contribute to a holistic approach and to enable coordinated programming and wants to be at the forefront of innovative nexus solutions.

Act Church of Sweden shall therefore conduct a geographically synchronised and coordinated programme work. Work on long-term and complex crises, including refugee response, begins only where Act Church of Sweden has local and long-term partner relationships. Humanitarian analysis and preparedness shall be integrated in all programmes, and as support in that work there is a strategic direction for Act Church of Sweden's humanitarian work.

3.3.4 NATIONAL COORDINATION WITHIN THE CHURCH OF SWEDEN

Challenges at the global, national, and local levels are interconnected, and we are interdependent. The Church of Sweden is an influential actor locally, nationally, and internationally, and there are many areas where different parts of the Church of

Sweden work together and contribute to positive changes for people who live in vulnerable situations. Much of the work that is done at the parish level is linked to events internationally. Our involvement at all levels gives us special opportunities to adopt a holistic approach to the challenges.

The International department has a supportive role towards dioceses and parishes in order to contribute with quality assurance, and to contribute to in-depth knowledge and increased involvement in Act Church of Sweden's work. One example is the extensive work with exchanges and internship programmes together with the dioceses to give young people and other people the opportunity to share faith and life.

Information sharing and internal cooperation are essential for taking advantage of all the experiences that exist within the church, creating synergies and maintaining our credibility as an actor. In meetings with other churches and organisations, the various sections of the Church of Sweden shall act as one coherent actor. This is especially important in our ecumenical relations with the Christian Council of Sweden, the Swedish Mission Council, WCC and LWF.

The Church of Sweden's representatives, in the various contexts, come from different parts of the Church. The work with Agenda 2030, migration and climate are examples of areas that require internal cooperation, as much of the work done at the parish, diocese and national level is linked to the international challenges. To increase efficiency and relevance, close cooperation is needed on policy dialogue, learning and improvement of knowledge and working methods within certain areas, such as migration, climate and sustainability, extractive industries, indigenous peoples as well as theology and ecumenism.

3.4 ADVOCACY

Possibilities for the fulfilment of human rights and global sustainability goals are influenced by the decisions and frameworks of local, regional and global decision-makers. By conducting qualitative and long-term policy dialogue and lobbying to influence political processes, attitudes and social norms, Act Church of Sweden can contribute to change that promotes the realisation of the goals outlined in the theory of change. The work is based on some important relations that are found in italics in the text below.

3.4.1 POLICY DIALOGUE

Act Church of Sweden calls the efforts to influence political processes and decisions, as well as attitudes and social norms, policy dialogue to accentuate dialogue as a method and approach. Policy dialogue is long-term work, which aims to contribute to positive change in politics, policy and practice for all people's equal value and human rights. *In order to change structural root causes that hinder peace, justice, equality, security, ecological sustainability and the realisation of human rights, Act Church of Sweden engage in qualitative and long-term policy dialogue.*

Act Church of Sweden shall have a long-term perspective and start from an analysis of the root causes of the problems when we design strategies for policy dialogue. In policy dialogue, Act Church of Sweden operates together with local, national, regional, and global organisations and networks, both religious and secular. We also cooperate with foundations, educational institutions and research institutions, interest groups and bilaterally with partner organisations. The work involves both moral and legal duty bearers, and various methods are used to achieve change, such as lobbying, roundtable discussions and public seminars, dialogue with and capacity building of decision-makers as well as influencing public opinion. *Act Church of Sweden strives to create and strengthen synergies between actors at the local, regional and global level in the policy dialogue and wants to contribute to civil society and rights holders themselves identifying when national legislation does not guarantee human rights so that accountability can take place at an appropriate level.* Creating opportunities for dialogue and identifying and strengthening actors for change is particularly important in situations where the democratic space is restricted.

For Act Church of Sweden's regional and global policy dialogue to be relevant, it needs to be based on local challenges and local ability to take action. Act Church of Sweden's regional and global policy dialogue complements the work that partner organisations do to hold duty bearers accountable. We strive for a coordinated, coherent and effective policy dialogue work that promotes and contributes to sustainable structural change nationally as well as internationally.

In order for local and structurally vulnerable groups and organisations' perspectives to characterise the policy dialogue and its results, their power and influence in the policy dialogue process needs to increase. The people and societies affected by decisions at the national, regional, and international level shall have the opportunity to participate in problem formulation, analyses of the root causes of problems and proposals for measures, and if possible be able to participate and influence through participation in relevant arenas.

The policy dialogue is therefore directly linked to the challenges Act Church of Sweden faces in its work, but research, including theological research, also constitutes an important basis for policy dialogue. Act Church of Sweden's instrumental advantages such as special expertise and unique relationships should also be weighed in the choice of advocacy issues and approaches.

Opinion formation is an important part of the policy dialogue work, both for creating an expectation and a space for decision-makers to take action on the global policy issues and for influencing attitudes, positions and actions in the church and society.

During the strategy period, Act Church of Sweden conducts policy dialogue:

- to defend human rights and democratic values and principles

- to draw attention to the current situation in regional contexts where Act Church of Sweden's partners operate
- to counteract discriminatory and stigmatising norms, practices and legislation that restrict the implementation of gender justice and SRHR
- so that the international humanitarian community and global financiers shall take their responsibility to redistribute power and resources to people and communities affected by the crisis
- so that climate measures and climate financing shall be implemented
- for strong, human rights-based and development-effective development policy and financing at the Swedish, European and global levels
- for gender-integrated, broad, and general social protection and healthcare systems that include SRHR

3.5 ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN'S PROGRAMME

The programmes are based on Act Church of Sweden's overall theory of change, and the content is based on current context analysis and in partner dialogue. The programmes are based on established relationships and networks, but they are also constantly developed based on changes in the context and collaborative relationships. This is done through regular and in-depth analysis of the context together with faith-based actors, in broader civil society forums and with public and private actors. In its programmes, Act Church of Sweden shall have great flexibility and adaptability in the support to churches and local actors' regional and national analyses and priorities.

The following guidelines apply to Act Church of Sweden's programmes:

- The programmes shall provide a framework for development cooperation, humanitarian work, policy dialogue and communication in local, regional and global contexts.
- The programmes shall together cover the whole of and mutually strengthen the work that take place within the strategic working methods mobilisation, capacity development, collaboration, and advocacy.
- The programs shall be permeated by the values stated in the strategic plan and be directly linked to Act Church of Sweden's theory of change and goals.
- The programmes shall, based on a national, regional, and global analysis of power and context, describe the perspectives and priorities that direct all the work.
- The programmes shall clarify how Act Church of Sweden's commitments for quality and accountability can be complied with in their work, as well as analyse and describe how risks are to be managed.
- The programmes shall be developed and implemented in close cooperation with relevant ACT structures.
- All activities and initiatives that Act Church of Sweden wants to carry out with partners and stakeholders shall clearly link to the programme's overall goals and priorities.

NOTES

¹ pz 109, Samlas kring hoppet, Antje Jackelén, 2016, Verbum.

² Cf. John 3:16; Matt 25:40; Rom 2:11; James 2:1.

³ Romans 12:11-12

⁴ Our theology: A life-empowering faith as our driving force -

<https://internwww.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=1472661>

⁵ https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/busan-partnership-for-effective-development-co-operation_54de7baa-en?ga=2.99382552.787948868.1630998572-1454831460.1626097109

⁶ <https://csopartnership.org/resource/istanbul-principles-for-cso-development-effectiveness/>

⁷ <https://charter4change.org/>

⁸ <https://www.chsalliance.org/>

⁹ <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/agenda2030>

¹⁰ The Church of Sweden Board of Education's opinion on religious dialogue and mission -

<https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/filer/587615/L%C3%A4ron%C3%A4mndens%20yttrande%202021%2005y%20Religionsdialog%20och%20omission.pdf?id=2268238>

¹¹ A Bishop's letter on ecclesiastical acts in a multi-religious context, p. 33 -

<https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/biskopsbrev/biskopsbrev-om-de-kyrkliga-handlingarna-i-en-mangreligios-kontext>

¹² The Swedish Mission Council Value foundation -

<https://ihs.smc.global/documents/D9BA6D76-360F-4F1E-9A42-25DA0C1E6AFF/Value%20Foundation.pdf>

¹³ A Bishop's letter about the climate. 2019.

<https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/a-bishops-letter-about-the-climate>

¹⁴ Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development -

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

¹⁵ See further in Our theology: A life-empowering faith as our driving force -

<https://internwww.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=1472661>

¹⁶ <https://charter4change.files.wordpress.com/2021/06/c4c-joint-analysis-and-recommendations-for-the-gb-annual-meeting-2021.pdf>

¹⁷ The Church of Sweden's strategy for theological education in a global context.

¹⁸ Act Church of Sweden has signed the principles for Locally led adaptation -

<https://www.wri.org/initiatives/locally-led-adaptation/principles-locally-led-adaptation>

¹⁹ Together towards life.

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes>

²⁰ Variations of the Golden rule are found in many religions, for example, in the seventh chapter of the Gospel of Matthew.

²¹ <https://www.hqai.org/en/network/audited-partners/certified-partners/act-church-of-sweden/>

²² According to the OECDs definition of capacity development -

<https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/public-cd-tc/wiki/about-capacity-development>

²³ See the Walk to Emmaus in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel of Luke.

²⁴ The Church of Sweden's strategy for theological education in a global context.

²⁵ See, for example, Waking the Giant

<https://wakingthegiant.lutheranworld.org/>

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