Annual Impact Report

MORE THAN 60 YEARS
ACTING TOGETHER
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We regard ourselves as an international child rights organisation with Christian values. Since 1959, we have been campaigning on behalf of disadvantaged young people and their rights. In 2021 we were active in 36 countries. Together with Kindernothilfe in Luxembourg, Austria and Switzerland, we have empowered, protected and enabled the participation of more than 2.3 million girls and boys in 530 projects. We have projects in 33 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. We are a member of the Diakonisches Werk of the Evangelical Church in Rhineland-Westfalen-Lippe e. V. (Diakonie RWL).

Our vision
Each child has the potential to change our one world. That is why we help towards ensuring that children’s voices are heard. Together with girls, boys and their communities, we work to improve their lives and living conditions and, thereby, contribute to the realisation of children’s rights. They have the opportunity to have a future that is just and the freedom to develop their personality.

Our work
We are part of a global movement and believe it is our responsibility to provide children with an education, protect them against violence and economic exploitation and uphold their right to participation. We support locally initiated projects and are actively involved in programmes for particularly disadvantaged children. We help create a fairer living environment, in which equal consideration is given to human and environmental needs. This includes a concerted commitment during and after humanitarian disasters. Through worldwide dialogue, we learn from the experiences of other organisations working with and for children and make our own know-how and experience available through training courses and consultancy services. Through advocacy, development education, political campaigns and public relations work – often in co-operation with our partners, in alliances and networks – we advocate the realisation of children’s rights in our dealings with people in positions of responsibility and decision-makers throughout the world.

Our sponsors
Around 205,000 people make our work possible: 68,000 of them on a regular basis through long-term funding, 56,300 of them through sponsorships, and a further 1,000 as volunteers.

A number of public figures use their high profile to raise public awareness for our work. The Kindernothilfe Foundation, state subsidies and institutional funding also make a significant contribution to our project work.

Integrity and transparency
Every year since 1992, we have received the seal of quality for donations from the German Central Institute for Social Issues (DZI). This certifies its financial responsibility and statutory use of donations. Within the scope of the PwC Transparency Awards, Kindernothilfe has received several awards for the high-quality and transparency of our reporting.
The Kindernothilfe board members report on the impacts of the Corona pandemic on our work, the situation of children throughout the world and on other developments in Germany and abroad.

The defining element of this reporting year was unquestionably the Corona pandemic. Over the course of many months, it had an impact on all the countries, in which we work, sometimes with devastating effects on the overall social situation and, above all, on children’s rights. In many of these countries, the pandemic has exposed poor governance and the inadequacy of health and education systems. After a decade of growing social and economic inequality in many places, the pandemic is continuing to add fuel to the fire in long-standing problem areas.

In many cases, this has led to the erosion of mechanisms to protect children in violent situations. The lack of protection for people in our partner countries as a consequence of vaccine injustice and the Coronavirus waves together with many other crises meant that, in most countries, workshops and face-to-face meetings, in particular, were inconceivable. In many parts of the world, the pandemic has led to a reversal in the process of realising children’s rights, including education, social security, participation, etc., which underlines the importance of the child rights work of Kindernothilfe and our partners.

But at the end of the day, despite the difficult circumstances and with some necessary adjustments to our working procedures and planned measures, we successfully implemented a major proportion of what we had originally planned. Compared to 2021, we intend to and will – significantly increase programme funding in 2022.

Kindernothilfe International

Our new mission statement and strategic planning for the years 2021 to 2025 took shape as a result of a complex, participatory process, which, for the first time, incorporated the wide-ranging perspectives from our head office, our European alliance and partner countries. As an organisation, we will continue with the process of becoming a global Kindernothilfe International and make our contribution as part of a more developed civil society, also through our advocacy and educational work on behalf of children’s rights. As part of our overall strategic orientation, we will be concentrating, in the coming years, on realising our vision as set out in our mission statement:

“A voice for every child – a voice that can be heard! Because every child has the potential to change our One World. Children have the opportunity to enjoy a future that is inconceivable. In many parts of the world, the pandemic is continuing to add fuel to the fire in long-standing problem areas.”

Within the scope of our global programme strategies (first strategic area), we will combine core working areas such as project support, capacity development, fundraising & institutional funding as well as public relations and educational work within a programmatic focus. We are, thereby, specifying how we will implement children’s rights in the context of such fundamental challenges as climate change, flight and migration, the growth of authoritarian tendencies in many countries and digitalisation. We will continue to focus on four key children’s rights. The rights to protection against violence, to protection against economic exploitation, to participation and to education. Through this, we are intensifying programme-based exchange, joint learning, and the acquisition of expertise, while strengthening coherence within a Kindernothilfe International.

Political and humanitarian crises and disasters lead to crises in many parts of the world, for example in Afghanistan, Haiti or Ethiopia, that have devastating consequences for children and young people (see p.10ff.). We are constantly responding to this altered situation, and continuously adapting our projects and providing funds for humanitarian assistance. At the same time, we are drawing conclusions for the strategic, conceptual development of our programme work, to enable us to continue making a contribution to the realisation of children’s rights – a contribution that is both heard and effective.
Kindernothilfe as part of a worldwide movement

Working as part of a close network with civil society, state institutions, decision-makers and others sharing our concern, “A voice for every child”, we consider ourselves part of a global movement (second strategic area). We are all guided by the desire for the voices and opinions of children and young people to be heard on socio-political issues. In 2021, one of our working priorities was to enable and enhance the active involvement and political participation of children and young people and establish youth committees in a range of contexts.

In times of crisis, above all, the responsibilities and duties of civil society become increasingly apparent. Where state action, alone, is insufficient or has reached its limits, civil society is required to act as a driving force to defend values and ideas and safeguard democratic freedoms and rights. Issues, such as those concerning the substantial right of all people to a life in dignity, their ability to take their lives into their own hands, the protection, support and participation of children and young people, are what unite us, as Kindernothilfe, with organisations and institutions, with partners and strong communities throughout the world. Firmly rooted at a local level and in international networks, we believe that now, more than ever, we are needed and challenged.

With yet another rise in the number of displaced people and refugees worldwide to more than 84 million (2020: 82.4 million) – alongside the exacerbation of crises, conflicts, violence, shrinking space processes and the impacts of climate change – the issue of “Children’s rights in the context of flight and expulsion” grew in significance. This was manifested in our advocacy work, expenditure on international co-operation projects increased by 11 million euros. The consequences of the pandemic for our partners in the respective countries meant that our budget for 2021 was not allocated in full. This will be a challenge for us in the current and coming years. If we are to take advantage of the financial options and opportunities at our disposal, we must respond more quickly by rescheduling our plans and invest accordingly.

In 2021, we co-operated with 346 partners in 530 projects in 36 countries. In a year of extraordinary challenges, we reached more than 2.3 million girls and boys worldwide and were able to continue our effective work of the past few years. We are very grateful to all our staff working in our head office, with our network partners and in the project countries for their excellent work in 2021 despite the ongoing pandemic and its difficult conditions.

The competitiveness and effectiveness of Kindernothilfe

Our competitiveness and effectiveness (third strategic area) have been reinforced by a positive annual result of 3.6 million euros. This area makes a substantial contribution to transparency, cost-effectiveness and achieving the greatest possible impact as well as social and ecological responsibility.

In an increasingly digital environment, it promotes innovation and forms the basis for the sustainable financing of Kindernothilfe programmes. It also carefully keeps track of the personal and professional development of staff and ensures the ongoing future-oriented development of the entire organisation.

In 2021, we were able to allocate almost 50 million euros to finance locally initiated projects and in the areas of education, information provision and advocacy. This is similar to funding levels in 2020. There was a decline in expenditure on project support, particularly for humanitarian assistance (-21 million euros). In contrast, expenditure on international co-operation projects increased by 11 million euros. The consequences of the pandemic for our partners in the respective countries meant that our budget for 2021 was not allocated in full. This will be a challenge for us in the current and coming years. If we are to take advantage of the financial options and opportunities at our disposal, we must respond more quickly by rescheduling our plans and invest accordingly.

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Katrin Weidemann, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Jürgen Borchardt, Chief Financial Officer (CFO)
Carsten Montag, Chief Programme Officer (CPO)
Contact: vorstand@kindernothilfe.de
Project funding 2021

Continental Maps take no account of any disputed territorial claims.

Project countries in Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Children/Youth</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>85,200</td>
<td>2,098,847 €</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eswatini</td>
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<td>Malawi</td>
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<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>Somalia</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
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<td>Uganda</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>1,013,994 €</td>
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<td>Zambia</td>
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<td>874,195 €</td>
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<td>Zimbabwe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Africa (general)*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>98,022 €</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Africa</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>1,849,400</td>
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* International co-ordination of self-help groups

Project countries in Asia/Europe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Children/Youth</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
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<td>India</td>
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<td>Indonesia</td>
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<td>Lebanon</td>
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<td>Myanmar</td>
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<td>Nepal</td>
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<td>Pakistan</td>
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<td>14,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>661,154 €</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2,800</td>
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<td>Asia (general)*</td>
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<td>Total Asia</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>208,400</td>
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* Principally for a Klimakollekt project

Project countries in Latin America

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<th>Country</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Children/Youth</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Bolivia</td>
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<td>1,754,448 €</td>
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<td>Brazil</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9,200</td>
<td>2,294,064 €</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>399,512 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3,300</td>
<td>625,507 €</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15,200</td>
<td>2,796,253 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20,600</td>
<td>2,293,657 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8,300</td>
<td>1,015,327 €</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8,100</td>
<td>1,404,867 €</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latin America (general)</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>74,200</td>
<td>12,584,466 €</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Alongside Klimakollekt, particularly SHG gender evaluation and various capacity building measures.
Our work in the world's trouble spots

2021

In many of our project countries, children and young people have been suffering for the past two years as a consequence of the Corona pandemic; this is compounded by the natural disasters caused by climate change as well as the economic and political crises that also bring violence and repression in their wake. For the people in Haiti, Afghanistan, Ethiopia or in the refugee camps on Lesbos in Greece, there is no peace. These are just some of the places, where we, together with our partners, actively supported children and their families again in 2021.

Text: Mirjam Kuschmierz, Carsten Montag

Kindernothilfe has been involved in Haiti since 1973. We are currently working with eight partner organisations in support of 11 projects to protect children against increasing violence and, in addition to schooling, enabling them to have a say in their future.

Since President Moïse was assassinated on the 7th of July 2021, the country has been teetering on the edge of the abyss. The background to the killing is still unclear. The new government under interim Prime Minister, Ariel Henry, is unstable, while the presidential and parliamentary elections have been postponed. Nearly every day, there are reports of kidnappings by criminal gangs that have taken over in many areas, controlling the food and energy supply. The state is virtually powerless in the face of the indiscriminate violence that threatens the lives of the children and their families in our projects. As a result, the Collège Véréna in the capital city had to close temporarily. The final year classes have mean-while been able to take their school-leaving examinations. Fear and insecurity are prevalent among staff working for our partners and in our local office, a situation exacerbated by irregular working hours, curtailed project activities and extreme psychological stress.

The protracted precariousness of the security situation and the impacts of the Corona pandemic have led to mounting poverty; lockdowns and riots have resulted in temporary closures of markets and shops. With no savings and dwindling incomes, families are subjected to enormous pressure. And on top of all this, the price of staple foods continues to rise.

In Child Friendly Spaces, which were quickly set up after the earthquake, children had somewhere to eat, play and learn together, while their parents tried to rebuild their homes.

Photo: Kindernothilfe partner

We were in the process of expanding our self-help group work in Afghanistan, which had been so effective, when the Taliban seizure of power at the end of August 2021 forced a world-wide reappraisal of the situation. Since then, there has been a drastic deterioration in the security situation. Violent clashes and attacks throughout the country, armed raids and kidnappings are just some of the reasons for the dramatic deterioration in the children’s and human rights situation. As far as women and girls are concerned, the Taliban have introduced fundamental restrictions on their freedom of movement and their access to public life and education.

Afghanistan

We have been active in Afghanistan since 2002. In the reporting year, we funded five projects in co-operation with three long-standing partners. Our commitment focused on the right to education, especially for children with disabilities, peace education and working with self-help groups to empower women, children and local communities.

As part of a symbolic protest action at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, we demanded equal rights for all refugees.

Photo: Kindernothilfe

We are currently working directly with 11 projects to protect children against increasing violence and, in addition to schooling, enabling them to have a say in their future.

In Afghanistan, which had been so effective, when the Taliban seizure of power at the end of August 2021 forced a world-wide reappraisal of the situation. Since then, there has been a drastic deterioration in the security situation. Violent clashes and attacks throughout the country, armed raids and kidnappings are just some of the reasons for the dramatic deterioration in the children’s and human rights situation. As far as women and girls are concerned, the Taliban have introduced fundamental restrictions on their freedom of movement and their access to public life and education.

Photo: Knut Bry

Food aid from our partners in Afghanistan during the Corona pandemic.

Photo: Kindernothilfe partner

Aroso (18) landed in Lesbos after fleeing Afghanistan. In the project run by Kindernothilfe partner, Lesvos Solidarity, she makes bags and pieces of art out of discarded life jackets and inflatable boats.

Photo: Knut Bry

10

11
Greece

In 2021, we implemented five projects with four local partners. Through the provision of concrete humanitarian assistance, the creation of child protection centres and psychosocial support, we successfully supported children and other young refugees at the EU’s external border in Greece. These activities were accompanied by intensive lobbying and advocacy work in Germany.

With our partner, Zeuxis, we support a guest house for sick refugee children and their families. Another partner, The Smile of the Child, supports families in need from different countries in various service facilities. Together with Lesvos Solidarity, we are involved in a project providing psychosocial support for women, children and young people. For refugees, the fulfilment of human rights and children’s rights is, in every respect, utopian. Through a range of activities we have put the spotlight on rights violations. A postcard campaign, with around 15,000 signatories, directed at the then German Minister of the Interior, Horst Seehofer, addressed a number of demands to the German Government:

- to allow a greater number of particularly vulnerable refugees to leave the refugee camps and be granted asylum in Germany – above all young mothers and their children,
- to work with other EU states to increase pressure on the Greek government to stand up for the protection of rights and humane accommodation for refugees, but, above all, for the protection of children, and
- to work resolutely to finally put an end to the life-threaten-
ing practice of daily pushbacks by the Greek coast guard and navy, which violate international law.

We were also able to establish confidential dialogue with the German Ministry of the Interior (BMI), which gave us the opportunity to address the advocacy concerns of our Greek partner organisations. These concerns have been included in governmental negotiations between the BMI and the Greek Ministry of Migration and in the co-ordination processes at EU level. This will remain one of our working commitments in 2022, despite the increasingly repressive political context confronting NGOs working with refugees in Greece.

In front of the German Ministry of the Interior in Berlin: the handover of around 15,000 signatures as part of a campaign on behalf of better accommodation for refugees on Lesbos. Photo: Martin Bandiolo

Ethiopia

We have been active in Ethiopia since 1972, supporting more than 600,000 children and young people in 41 projects in the reporting year. We provide them with education, protection against violence, child labour and child trafficking, and promote food security and inclusion.

The child rights situation in Ethiopia deteriorated sharply in 2021, with violent conflicts and air raids on cities in almost all parts of the country. These were accompanied by massacres, looting, sexual assaults and the destruction of crops, plunging the country, especially the north-western Tigray region, into a heightened state of emergency. Nationwide, nearly four million people were displaced. Starvation is widespread. Ten percent of children under the age of five are severely malnourished, far exceeding the World Health Organization’s upper limit of three percent. This means that the lives of 70,000 children are at risk.

In view of these problems, we have been working with our partner organisations to carry out humanitarian aid projects in the regions of Tigray, Amhara and Afar. The priorities are food distribution, the introduction of child protection practices in the camps for IDPs, the creation of child-friendly shelters, psychosocial support and the construction of temporary schools for children affected by the war.

Given these violent conflicts and recurring natural disasters, it is highly likely that the need for humanitarian assistance will persist or, even, increase in the not-too-distant future. That is why we are extending our provision of humanitarian assistance, since the consequences of the drought in the Horn of Africa will continue to exacerbate the situation of the people in the area. We are also considering supporting longer-term rehabilitation projects in war zones, particularly in the areas of urgently needed psychosocial support for traumatised children, the economic empowerment of families and educational services.

The Corona pandemic has also had serious socio-economic impacts on children: access to health services and educational institutions has become more difficult, while food insecurity and domestic violence have increased. Since public health resources focused increasingly on combating and preventing Covid-19 in 2021, the treatment of childhood illnesses were pushed into the background. As a result of lockdowns, many people lost their livelihoods and schools were closed. Women and children were exposed even more to violence, partly because they were often hired out to work for others or put to use at home to make up for the shortfalls in income.

Outlook

Back in 2021, the attack on Ukraine by Russian troops on the 24th of February 2022 was still inconceivable. This war is inflicting physical and mental suffering on millions of people. We made the decision to intervene on behalf of refugee children and women in Moldova and Romania. The war is also having an enormous impact on food security in many parts of the world. We will take advantage of our programmes to discharge our responsibility to help those affected – with the solidarity and financial support of our donors.
Our commitment to education

Within the scope of our project and advocacy work, we are committed to ensuring that the right to education is realised throughout the world. The combination of advocacy and project work is the only way to ensure the long-term success of our programmes, since they are, thereby, anchored at a political and institutional level.

For many years, Kindernothilfe has campaigned politically for the right to education, in a German context primarily through the Global Education Campaign (GBK) alliance. We closely observe the Government and international organisations, such as the World Bank, and put pressure on them when they fail to live up to their commitments to combat the crisis in global education or when their policies actually exacerbate educational injustice.

In March 2021, together with the GBK Alliance and Susanne Menge, a member of the Bundestag (Green Party), we invited interested politicians to join experts from Uganda to discuss the compulsory closedown of the Ugandan education system and its consequences. Corona forced schools to close there for two years, longer than anywhere else in the world. School lessons were mainly broadcast on the radio or television. But this only reached five to ten percent of the around 15 million schoolchildren, most of them in Kampala. In northern rural areas, 60 percent of families have no television or radio. The radical school closures have had a dramatic impact on children’s education, as reported by Vincent Baguma, head of the Uganda National Teachers’ Union (UNATU) and by Nassazi Kyaga from the organisation, Deaf Link Uganda.

By March 2021, more than 168 million children worldwide had experienced the closure of their schools for 12 months or more because of lockdowns. A third of these girls and boys could not access distance learning and received no schooling whatsoever. The longer children are unable to attend school, the greater the risk that they will never return. Before the pandemic, 258 million children and young people had no access to education. This number will increase significantly.

This is also confirmed by the experts from Uganda. “The teenage pregnancy rate has risen to disturbing levels in Uganda and throughout the region,” Vincent Baguma said. The current UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Koumbou Boly Barry, estimates that up to ten million girls and boys in Uganda, boys and girls had to leave school, say the experts from Uganda. This means that, after the workshop, he contacted the local mayor. They are now working together to review which structures in the city could be changed.

It is part of everyday life for many girls and boys around the world: physical and sexualised violence, but also psychological injuries, neglect or exploitation. The Corona pandemic has led to a substantial increase in the number of children experiencing violence. As a child rights organisation, we work closely with our partners to counteract this in the long term.

Every year, one billion children under the age of 18 throughout the world are subjected to all kinds of violence. These alarming figures from the WHO demonstrate the urgency of the matter. In the most recent report, 231 million children under the age of 18 were treated for physical and psychological injuries, neglect or exploitation. The more of these injuries, the greater the risk that they will never return. Before the pandemic, 258 million children and young people had no access to education. This number will increase significantly.

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Our commitment to participation

For many years, now, Kindernothilfe has been campaigning for children’s voices to be heard on issues affecting them. The global collaborative campaign, “Dialogue Works”, really took off in 2021, with the children and young people involved engaging in creative dialogue with political decision-makers.

There were also several international virtual events, which gave a voice to the young people. At the end of 2020, Kindernothilfe, in co-operation with the tdh International Federation (Terre des Hommes), launched the global Dialogue Works campaign to reinforce the right of working children and young people to be given a voice in social and political processes and to anchor this right sustainably. The campaign, funded by the German Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development, will run until 2024.

Dialogue Works supports more than 30 committees of working children in 15 countries, which are supported by our local partners. The members are girls and boys, aged between eight and 18. They come from different regions, some go to school, some do not, some live in refugee accommodation, others in indigenous communities. Together, they have had wide-ranging experiences of child labour, which they discuss with one another. Their goal is to address problems at a local level, initiate improvements and engage in open dialogue, based on mutual appreciation and respect, with political and social decision-makers.

During a radio programme, members of the children’s committee in Indonesia reported on their experiences as working children and called for continuous access to education. They also organised dialogue with Government officials from the Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection. Committee members in Rwanda spoke with officials, an inspector from the Ministry of Labour, representatives of voluntary community-based child protection groups, civil society organisations, the media and youth mentors. Members of children’s committees in Peru came together with representatives of a national network of working children for a livestream discussion with the President of the Special Commission for the Protection of Children. Members of children’s committees in Kenya and Zambia spoke online during the UN General Assembly with the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children about their experiences during the Corona pandemic.

And, outside of the children’s committees, young people were also exercising their right to participation: the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) invited young people from Kenya and Zambia to a virtual conference focusing on child labour in agriculture. At Kindernothilfe’s virtual event during the World Climate Conference in Glasgow, young people from partner organisations called for girls and boys, who are affected most by climate change, to be more involved in climate justice measures.

The United Nations declared 2021 as the “International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour”. The goal, to abolish all forms of child labour by 2030, should, at last, be on the horizon. But the COVID-19 pandemic is undoing much of the progress made so far and highlighting fundamental problems. Kindernothilfe is working on many levels to bring about an improvement in the situation of working children.

The global statistics on child labour published by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 2021 show a dramatic reversal: for the first time in years, the number of working children is rising again. According to the ILO, around 160 million children are currently in child labour, about half of them under exploitative conditions.

In a global survey in six of our partner countries, children and young people reported on their experiences during the pandemic. As well as a loss of income, they highlighted education, physical stresses and strains and fears about the future. Above all, many girls and boys suffered as a result of school closures. The lack of digital end devices, restricted internet coverage and the cost of internet access have led to higher school dropout rates. In Guatemala, for example, the Education Ministry reported an estimated 40 to 60 percent increase in school dropout rates. Here, especially, and in Indonesia and Zambia, children, young people and their caregivers expressed their fears that many girls and boys would not return to school when the pandemic is over. Partner organisations in the Philippines and Kenya reported not only that child labour was increasing, but that more children and young people are performing physically demanding work or working in hazardous, and exploitative situations.

The results of Kindernothilfe’s “In the spotlight” study on the situation of working children during Corona and the recommendations as to how the young people, themselves, their parents, teachers, media, governments and civil society organisations can improve this situation are available at www.kindernothilfe.org/publications.

The pandemic has once again confirmed that we live in a globally connected world. As Kindernothilfe, we, therefore, very much welcome the passing of legislation in Germany in 2021 for “corporate due diligence” obligations in supply chains. What and how we consume – food, fashion, technology – has an impact on other countries and their populations. That is why it is important that we take responsibility and ensure that environmental standards, minimum wages and occupational safety are internationally binding and observed. In co-operation with the “Supply Chain Initiative”, we have campaigned from the outset for effective legislation and put children’s rights at the heart of these efforts.
Impact orientation of our project work

Projects can only achieve sustainable change, when their impacts – from their development, through their implementation, to their completion – are systematically planned, monitored and managed.

1. Project initiation

The partner submits a short draft of the planned project, providing a brief outline of any particular problems, the target groups, the changes the project seeks to bring about and the strategies required to achieve this. We evaluate these within the scope of our overall country strategy and discuss them with the partner concerned. After basic approval is granted, the project can move on to the next phase.

2. Project planning

The partner carries out a systematic analysis of the child rights situation in the project region. This is the basis for the definition of the positive changes in the lives of the target group, which the project intends to achieve. The respective project goals, strategies and activities are presented in a log frame. Indicators are formulated to monitor the progress in achieving goals during project implementation. All this is accomplished with the participation of the target groups, especially children and young people, to ensure that the goals are relevant to them and that their know-how is incorporated into the project design.

3. Project approval & implementation

We discuss the project proposal with the partner. Once the project has been approved, the implementation phase begins. In many projects, groups and committees set their own goals for the changes they wish to achieve and regularly monitor progress using simple, often graphic, methods. This enables them to perceive the impacts of their own actions while simultaneously promoting the human right to participation.

4. Project monitoring & steering

Monitoring enables partners and target groups to observe the achievement of project goals: the status of indicators is specified and jointly analysed at the beginning of the project and thereafter at regular intervals. Lessons learned for ongoing project implementation are determined and any project adjustments agreed with us. All projects are visited regularly by Kindernothilfe staff. The focus is on progress towards the achievement of goals, the appropriateness of project design, the quality of the implementation of the activities and project management.

5. Reporting

The annual project reports of our partners have a standardised format and provide information on project implementation and the impacts achieved, partly on the basis of indicators. They reflect on successes as well as problems and make proposals for adjustments to project strategies and activities. These project reports also serve as the basis for the reports received each year by all donors.

6. Evaluation

In the past two years, 69 project evaluations were initiated in co-operation with our partners. Project evaluations are strategically initiated, for example, where the project design requires further readjustment. All evaluations are put out to tender and carried out by external, independent experts. The benchmark for this is our evaluation concept. After each evaluation, our partners express their views on the conclusions and discuss their proposed project design adjustments with us.

In addition to this, we commission cross-project strategic evaluations, which are of relevance for our programme orientation. The consistent use of evaluation results is important, not only as a means of enhancing the impact of projects, but also for our work as a learning organisation.

Professional networking and joint initiatives

In VENRO’s Impact Monitoring Working Group we share experiences and ideas with colleagues from other organisations, run training courses with them, develop joint position papers and hold discussions with Government ministries and politicians to take advantage of our combined influence. As a member of the German Evaluation Society (DeGeVaI), we participate regularly in conferences and working groups.

Albert Eiden and Ariana Fürst
Quality Development Managers

Contact
ariana.fuerst@kindernothilfe.de

Capacity Development

We wish to make a contribution to ensuring that long-term impacts are better planned and monitored. Determining whether planned activities have been carried out or skills and know-how learned in training courses are being put to use, is fairly simple. However, measuring the tangible changes in people’s lives and the extent to which a project has contributed to this, is often considerably more difficult. That is why we provide training for our staff and around 90 partners in 14 countries.

We also support our partners through a broad range of information brochures on specific aspects of impact-oriented project planning and monitoring, for example, data collection. The accompanying dialogue with our partners also enhances their – and our – understanding of impact orientation.
Gender equality through women’s groups?

Results of a study of our self-help group approach

The self-help group approach (SHG approach)

For more than 20 years, Kindernothilfe has been reaching women affected by poverty in 23 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America through its SHG approach. The women organise themselves in SHGs, something that also benefits children: Kindernothilfe gauges the success of its approach in terms of the food security of the children of these women, their access to health care and their educational opportunities. Women are at the heart of this. How the approach affects them, their rights and their opportunities as women and what this means for its further development, has been the subject of a scientific examination conducted by an international evaluation team over the past two years.

The evaluation approach

In autumn 2019, Kindernothilfe commissioned Camino gGmbH to evaluate a change in gender relations that may have been (partly) generated by the approach. A team of three evaluators – Michaela Raab, Laura Ceresna and Khanysa Mabyeka – conducted the evaluation in three stages:

- In autumn 2019, workshops and discussions, together with an analysis of project documentation and international studies, were used to ascertain how SHGs can contribute to fairer gender relations. The team, together with Kindernothilfe, applied a theory-based approach to develop a theory of change that shows both the anticipated and actual gender impacts of the SHG approach and how these are related to more far-reaching changes.

- In a second stage, the team conducted four case studies, each involving two or three projects, with researchers in Haiti, India, Zambia and the Philippines. Altogether, more than 500 people were interviewed in 102 individual interviews (using guiding questions) and 65 group discussions.

Most interviewees were SHG members and their families (mainly children), but also included staff from Kindernothilfe and its partner organisations as well as community officials and gender experts. In addition, extensive individual interviews were conducted with women from SHGs in each country, to allow them to talk uninhibitedly about their personal experiences and interests in a relaxing, protected environment.

- In a final stage, the evaluation team compared the results of the case studies in order to review the theory of change in the light of what actually happened in practice, supplement the findings from the evaluation and formulate recommendations.

In the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the case study in India to take a one-year break. At the beginning of 2021, the experts conducted three more case studies. In India and Zambia, the evaluations largely went ahead as planned. The experts visited SHGs and their umbrella organisations (the groups forge alliances to take joint action) with three projects in each, conducted focus group discussions and interviews and ran workshops with partner organisations.

Since travel in some cases was still severely restricted as a result of the pandemic, the interviews and discussions for the Philippines to be expanded to areas that could not otherwise have been visited. The opening and closing workshops in these two countries took place as video conferences and in Zambia as face-to-face events with additional video connection.

In all of the case studies, the evaluation team discovered that the contacts between the women and their regular use of small loans helped boost their self-confidence and reinforce their self-efficacy. This is indeed a significant change, especially for women, who, previously, were totally dependent on the income of other family members.

A slight change in gender relations within families – and occasionally in communities

There are also indications of changed power relations within families. Many women report that, as an SHG member, they are treated with more respect at home and that, thanks to having their own income, they are now more self-assertive when it comes to family decisions. Even small loans can bring about immediate change. But some respondents also know women, whose husbands have prevented them from joining a group. There are also examples of husbands, who have sole control of their wives’ income or have reduced their own financial contribution to the household.

There are few reports of the SHG approach having gender-related impacts at community level. On rare occasions in the Philippines, registrars have successfully been dissuaded from
Gender training in SHGs

The SHG approach is supported by women, who frequently live in unjust, sometimes life-threatening gender relations. The evaluation team, therefore, welcomes the fact that, for some years, now, Kindernothilfe and its partner organisations have been running both their own specifically developed and external gender training courses in SHGs. Basic knowledge of gender and women’s rights promotes awareness that prevailing gender relations are not God-given but can be changed. Such awareness-raising is, indeed, a step towards gender equality. But, what is lacking in gender training is the issue of sexual and reproductive health rights – despite its central importance for young women and girls. An unexpected pregnancy, for example, can often lead to a girl dropping out of school and abandoning the idea of studying – thereby, blocking opportunities to create a secure existence.

Gender training materials and methods must be adapted to the local context and used in a competent manner. In a few cases, such adjustments have been successful. Where SHG members have reading and writing difficulties, as is the case in Haiti, the training provided by the SHG umbrella organisation was less effective. In spite of these limitations, gender training courses – for example, using special gender modules for SHGs or other training materials – have empowered the participants interviewed to:

- take up work in traditional male domains (e.g. fishing);
- encourage husbands and sons to do their share of household work;
- seek support or provide it when they or women and girls closely related to them are affected by extreme gender-based violence.

Risks of the SHG approach

The approach does have its own dangers, for example when women, alongside their newly acquired paid work, continue to be responsible for the household and childcare. Some of this care work is often passed on to their daughters, which then means that they have less time to study, play and rest. It is still rare for men and boys to even do a little of this work.

Supporting victims of domestic violence can also create other problems. For example, when well-meaning SHG members advise a woman to use cleverer tactics and subtle negotiations to placate her husband. By doing this, they are implicitly making the victim at least partly responsible for the violence they have suffered. Where victims of violence have no access to appropriate, competent support, risks can be miscalculated and lives endangered.

Conclusion: the SHG approach – one piece of the puzzle

The evaluation team considered the approach to be a useful tool. But it is only one piece of the overall puzzle of complex factors that shape the lives of marginalised communities. The social, political and economic contexts, the group member herself, her family, the specific population groups, to which she belongs, determine living conditions and opportunities for change. The SHG approach can be an important step towards fairer gender relations. However, sustainable impacts require gender competence and can only be achieved through the long-term interaction of a broad range of actors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation team recommends that the SHG approach should be continued as a tool for the psychosocial and economic empowerment of women, albeit with adjustments to minimise risks and facilitate sustainable change. With respect to gender mainstreaming – i.e. the promotion of gender equality – gender justice should be identified as an explicit goal of the approach. In this respect, Kindernothilfe should take advantage of the know-how and insights of feminist organisations and experts, especially in partner countries.

Gender training courses should be expanded and more specifically adapted to the different target groups: SHG members, trainers, partner organisations and Kindernothilfe. Here too, the evaluators recommend co-operation with local organisations, including support structures for victims of gender-based violence.

In order to monitor progress and identify risks at an early stage, the Kindernothilfe evaluators recommend that gender-relevant changes in the project areas and possible connections with the SHG approach are regularly checked and assessed. They also propose a systematic increase in the gender skills of Kindernothilfe and the development of a gender strategy.

Kindernothilfe discussed the results of the evaluation in two online workshops with all colleagues working with the SHG approach in Africa, Asia, Central America and the Caribbean. Almost all recommendations were considered helpful, prioritised and implementation possibilities discussed. In 2022, there are plans to further improve and augment the training module, to refine the monitoring of the impacts in the SHG approach so that it is consistently gender-based and to improve co-operation with feminist initiatives and other organisations that support victims of gender-based violence.
At a glance

- **530 projects worldwide**
- **346 partner organisations**
- **36 countries**
- **16,340 self-help groups in 21 countries**
- **1,000 Volunteers**
- **More than 2.3 million children and young people supported**
- **€62.4 million euros**
- **79.7% project work**
- **33 project countries and 3 Kindernothilfe network countries (Austria, Luxembourg, Switzerland)**

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Düsseldorfer Landstrasse 180, 47249 Duisburg, Germany

Telephone: +49 203.7789-0
Fax: +49 203.7789-118
Info-Service: +49 203.7789-111
email: info@kindernothilfe.de
Editors: Gunhild Aiyub (editor in chief), Guido Osswald (financial report)
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**€66.0 million euros** in income