



COMPASS FOR AN EQUITABLE FUTURE

WORKING IN AND ON FRAGILITY TO FOSTER PEACEFUL,
EQUITABLE AND RESILIENT SOCIETIES

CONTENTS

1. WHY THIS COMPASS?	4
2. THE WORLD AROUND US	5
3. ABOUT CORDAID	7
4. THEORY OF CHANGE: LOCALLY-LED SYSTEMIC CHANGE	11
4.1 Health system strengthening	14
4.2 Inclusive education systems	16
4.3 Sustainable agri-food systems	18
4.4 Inclusive justice services and peace	20
4.5 Humanitarian assistance	22
5. FOUR CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES TO LEVERAGE IMPACT	24
5.1 Triple Nexus	24
5.2 Climate justice	24
5.3 Gender transformation	25
5.4 Racial justice, diversity, and inclusion	25
6. A FIT-FOR-PURPOSE ORGANISATION	26

Cover photo:

Nabitu Sola (32) and her one-year-old son Emmanuel sit outside a health centre in Kinshasa. They attended a Cordaid-funded mentoring session with a group of HIV+ women.

Supported by the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and 28 civil society partners, Cordaid runs a nationwide programme against HIV and TB in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

OUR MANIFESTO

Global crises increasingly challenge human co-existence.
They rob millions of the right to live in dignity.

Cordaid does not accept this world of growing inequality and exclusion.

We are one human family.
We need one another to face and solve the challenges of our time.
Like climate change and pandemics.

We believe in the power of an inclusive world and embrace diversity.
A world driven by social justice, sustainability, and gender equality.

Together, across borders and divides, we can build that world.

Our interdependence is what makes us human.
Our shared fragility is our strength.
By embracing it, we unlock the force of compassion.

At Cordaid, we connect, and we act.
We tap into this power of an equal world.

To create real change, we bring communities, citizens, policymakers,
And public and private actors together.
We make solidarity work.

Let us protect the common good of people everywhere.
Let us rise for equality.
Together, we are stronger.

1. WHY THIS COMPASS?

Every now and again we must evaluate our added value in this world. Is what we do and how we do it still relevant in the ever-changing setting in which we work? Are our efforts still effectively and efficiently contributing to a society that is just and fair? Are our areas of focus still of interest to marginalised and oppressed peoples on the one hand and to future generations on the other?

Today's Cordaid is a completely different organisation than the one that our ancestors created at the beginning of the twentieth century. At that time, Cordaid collected linen and mattresses to lodge Belgian refugees fleeing the horrors of World War I. Used spectacles were collected and sent in boxes overseas. With the support of Dutch society, we sent doctors and nurses as missionaries to the colonies. And, later during the last century, we received substantial amounts of government core subsidy to strengthen civil society in more than sixty countries.

Cordaid has always adapted to the demands and calls of an ever-changing society, by bringing outside dynamics in. And Cordaid maintained an open eye and ear to new insights of, and lessons learned by, its increasingly professional pool of expert staff. Bringing the inside out!

In all those shifts however, some things have never changed. From day one to today, we have been driven by the core values that characterise all major world religions: compassion and solidarity with our fellow humans across the world, the right for a dignified life for all women and men, and the care for our common home and goods. We are and continue to be Cordaid – compassionate in humanitarian assistance and development cooperation.

This strategy paper covers the outcomes of a highly interactive process in which we gathered the best minds of many a colleague, partner, and stakeholder during the last year. We did so as a new collective; since December 2020, ICCO and Cordaid have joined forces. The outcome of that process is not a classical 'multi-annual strategy document', but a compass. A tool that helps us to stay relevant and 'on course' as we navigate the coming years.

We will continue to do what we are good at: further strengthening locally-led systems for quality services and humanitarian assistance. And we will specifically add critical cross-cutting dimensions that are to assure that we remain relevant for the years ahead: the triple nexus, climate justice, gender transformation, as well as racial justice, diversity & inclusion. Not as stand-alone topics, but to be integrated into all we do and aspire for.

We account for and respond to the shifting paradigm on development aid as reflected by our embrace of the concepts of 'localisation' and 'locally-led' leadership. While applying this compass, we seek to internalise a locally-led narrative (organisational set-up, financing and business model) as well as modus operandi (and behaviour) while running operations and engaging with partners. As we are operating in an increasingly risk-prone as well as a severely competitive environment, our compass is calibrated against adaptations of our business model.

In the meantime: do enjoy the read and let our compass guide us in our joint endeavours towards a fairer and more sustainable world in 2030 — the dot on the horizon of the Agenda of the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).

Kees Zevenbergen / Heleen van den Berg – CEO
Lorena Paz Quintero – CFO
Ylse van der Schoot – COO

2. THE WORLD AROUND US

Our world faces different global crises that are increasingly interlinked. They strongly affect societies and deepen the divides between the rich and the poor. Environmental and climate crises, pandemics, forced migration of an unprecedented scale: they all expose the fragility and interdependence within our world. Indeed, they challenge human co-existence. People and societies in fragile contexts suffer the most. Wider and deeper divides increasing in-equality progressively undermines the efforts of people to create just, resilient, and peaceful societies, where all can live life in dignity. It makes Cordaid's work in fragile areas more urgent, and at the same time, more challenging.

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, continues to be one of our key bearings. Even more so, as the global community is seriously off track in its overarching goal of 'leaving no one behind' and respecting planetary limits.

But there is more than this agenda alone. New actors and initiatives emerge, offering new visions and strategies. Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si* calls for an ecological conversion interlinking environmental and social issues. The cry of the poor and the cry of the earth are increasingly seen as one. Initiatives of locally-led organisations are flourishing, both in the Global South and in the Global North. They all sharply point out that a good life for all can only be achieved within our planetary boundaries. Equity and ecology go hand in hand. There can be no sustainable social change without care for our common home. We carry responsibility to ensure that the costs related to climate justice do not add to the divide between the rich and poor, between the ones with and the ones without power.

We recognise that we need one another to face the challenges at hand. Hence the pledges by many leaders for cooperation, urging us to transcend our own limits and fears. Hence the need to establish new, equal partnerships. We exist by the grace of our partnerships and our commitment to forge alliances across geographical, religious, and sectoral divides.

Finally, the development sector itself has come under scrutiny. There is firm opposition from right wing, nationalist, and populist forces in the Global North. Increasingly, governments in the Global South take restrictive measures against international funding of civil society organisations and NGOs. But in a more critical/urgent/compelling/pressing sense, it also comes from actors in the Global South who criticise Global North dominance and the unequal division of power within the development sector. This critique has been constructive in that it pushes us to improve. We are challenged to change our roles vis-à-vis our partners, to share power and responsibilities, to revise and renew ourselves more speedily to keep ahead of all global changes and demands. To establish new alliances and new strategies that foster inclusivity and diversity and tackle all manifestations of colonialism.

Shared fragility

The global COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly altered life as we once knew it. While digital connection has become the norm for many, ever larger segments of our society – especially women, rural communities, and the urban poor – are grappling with even greater exclusion and marginalisation. Debates over access to vaccines have further illuminated how geo-political dynamics and the concentration of capital exacerbate socio-economic inequalities across and within countries. Like a mirror, COVID-19 has not only exposed the dark side of failed governance structures at all levels, but it lays bare our shared vulnerability to emerging threats.

Widening social and economic inequalities are particularly pronounced in the fragile settings Cordaid works in. As authoritarian regimes consolidate their power in response to growing uncertainty, civic space is becoming even more restricted. And the world's collective failure to tackle land degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change is not only having a profound impact on those who depend on land for their survival, but is contributing to entrenched poverty, displacement, and conflict. Tackling the many drivers of these deep-rooted challenges requires both visionaries, as well as inclusive governance structures, to ensure the fair and

sustainable allocation of limited resources, while also holding all actors – public, private, and civil society – accountable for building a more sustainable future for people and planet.

Strengthening systems to build resilience

We believe that every individual has the right, as well as the agency, to contribute to a just and fair world. Many countries and communities are caught up in a spiralling storm of natural hazards and human-made crises. In these fragile settings, not only are many people locked out of the decision-making processes that impact on their very survival, but the most marginalised are also hardest hit by injustice. Vulnerable populations often pay the highest price for basic services such as food, health, education, water, and energy. Moreover, they must deal with the consequences of failed governance structures that do not support basic rights or ensure fair market systems.

Yet, despite the uphill struggle that these populations face, we believe that their strength, resilience, and resourcefulness remain the primary power for change. The resourcefulness of the people we work with makes our common work possible and fosters innovation. To ensure the sustainability of our work, Cordaid applies a system strengthening approach for better access to health, food, education, and justice services (see Chapter 4), which is designed and conducted together with professionals and communities in the countries where we work.

Equitable partnerships

The legacy of colonisation, racism and power imbalances between the Global North and the Global South has long hampered growth and prospects in the countries we work in. Contemporary global politics can no longer accept these power imbalances. Shifting power for equitable partnerships leads to more impactful, just, effective, efficient, and sustainable development, humanitarian and peacebuilding measures and sectors. It thus challenges the root causes of unequal power dynamics between global and local actors in development and humanitarian assistance work. To internalise this development, current ways of working need to be adapted to complement, and where necessary, contribute to the role of local organisations in providing humanitarian assistance and sustainable development actions.

3. ABOUT CORDAID

We are an internationally operating value-based organisation with a double mandate. This means that we work on both humanitarian assistance as well as sustainable development. We work in and on fragility. We have emerged from the Dutch Catholic and Protestant traditions with their longstanding efforts in countering poverty and social injustice, both in the Netherlands and worldwide. The Christian social teachings on human dignity and the values of justice, compassion and care for the earth inspire and guide us in our work.

Vision

Cordaid does not accept a world of inequality and exclusion. We believe in a world where it is possible for everyone to live a life of dignity. Where people can break through barriers of poverty and exclusion, fully participate in their societies, and influence decisions that affect them. A world with an economy not driven by greed and limitless material growth, but by inclusivity, social and ecological justice, and gender equity. A sustainable world to pass on to future generations. That world is our goal. We work towards it in everything we do.

Locally-led development

Recognising that Cordaid has a temporary presence while actors in the countries we work in are there to stay, we embrace locally-led development. This also implies shifting the power, i.e., gradually but fundamentally changing Cordaid's role and that of its counterparts in all circumstances towards partnerships in which local partners lead and Cordaid plays a facilitating, complementary and supportive role.

For Cordaid, shifting the power means that actors in the countries we work in are leading on decisions and actions that affect them. This is both an overarching principle, as well as a way of working. It implies that country partners take up greater responsibilities. Together we shift power to achieve equitable partnerships and create an enabling environment for sustainable development.

As Cordaid, we support locally-led development and humanitarian initiatives through strong partnerships in which communities, activists and organisations are fully involved in decision-making, design, implementation, and progress monitoring. We encourage their leadership and ownership to create visions of change for system strengthening, and in holding their decision makers accountable and undertaking joint advocacy.

Mission

Inspired by Christian values we believe in the power of people to trigger inclusive social change in their own environment. We seek to strengthen the capacities and resilience of the people and communities we work with, so that they are better prepared to face their future challenges. Our responsibility and accountability lie with those who are poor, marginalised and excluded from safety, services and economic opportunity and sustainable livelihoods. We actively seek increased collaboration and synergies with likeminded organisations, while pursuing the further joining of forces.

How we work together

Problems in the Global South often have their roots and (part of) their solution in the Global North. This interconnectedness has become even more visible during global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and ecological hazards. Only by working together and joining forces worldwide do we have a chance to overcome these crises.

We believe that a true joining of forces is not possible without changing power relations, including those in our own collaboration with partner organisations. Our shifting-the-power agenda aims at creating more just resilient, and equitable relations between Global North and

Global South actors. It translates the subsidiarity principle of Christian social teachings into the domain of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Guided by our vision and mission, we are building broad partnerships to facilitate coordinated actions across local, national, and global levels. Our strategic choices are driven by the need to maximise our effectiveness and impact through economies of scale and scope. We promote solution-oriented actions that are aligned with relevant policy processes.

Advocacy work

Increasingly, Cordaid regards policy influencing as an integral part of our way of working. Both on the country level and at the international level, we are active in changing power structures to improve the position of the people we and our partner organisations represent. Cordaid does this often in networks and platforms of like-minded organisations. Joint advocacy is effective.

We empower communities to set their own agendas. We mobilise private sector actors and stimulate them to build partnerships with the public sector and support impact investments. Through our advocacy work we influence governments and international decision-makers to change policies. We provide resources, make impactful investments in public services to become more responsive to community needs. We do this through a system strengthening approach that involves results-based financing (see Chapter 4).

(Faith-based) networks

Cordaid stands with women, men, and children whose basic needs are unmet and whose rights are trampled. Starting in the heart of their communities, Cordaid builds partnerships and mobilises global networks, resources, and knowledge to help people move beyond survival and live in dignity. We actively participate in thematic and national networks in the countries we work in. These partnerships and alliances enable us to amplify the voice and agency of civil society organisations in our shared local, regional, and global advocacy efforts.

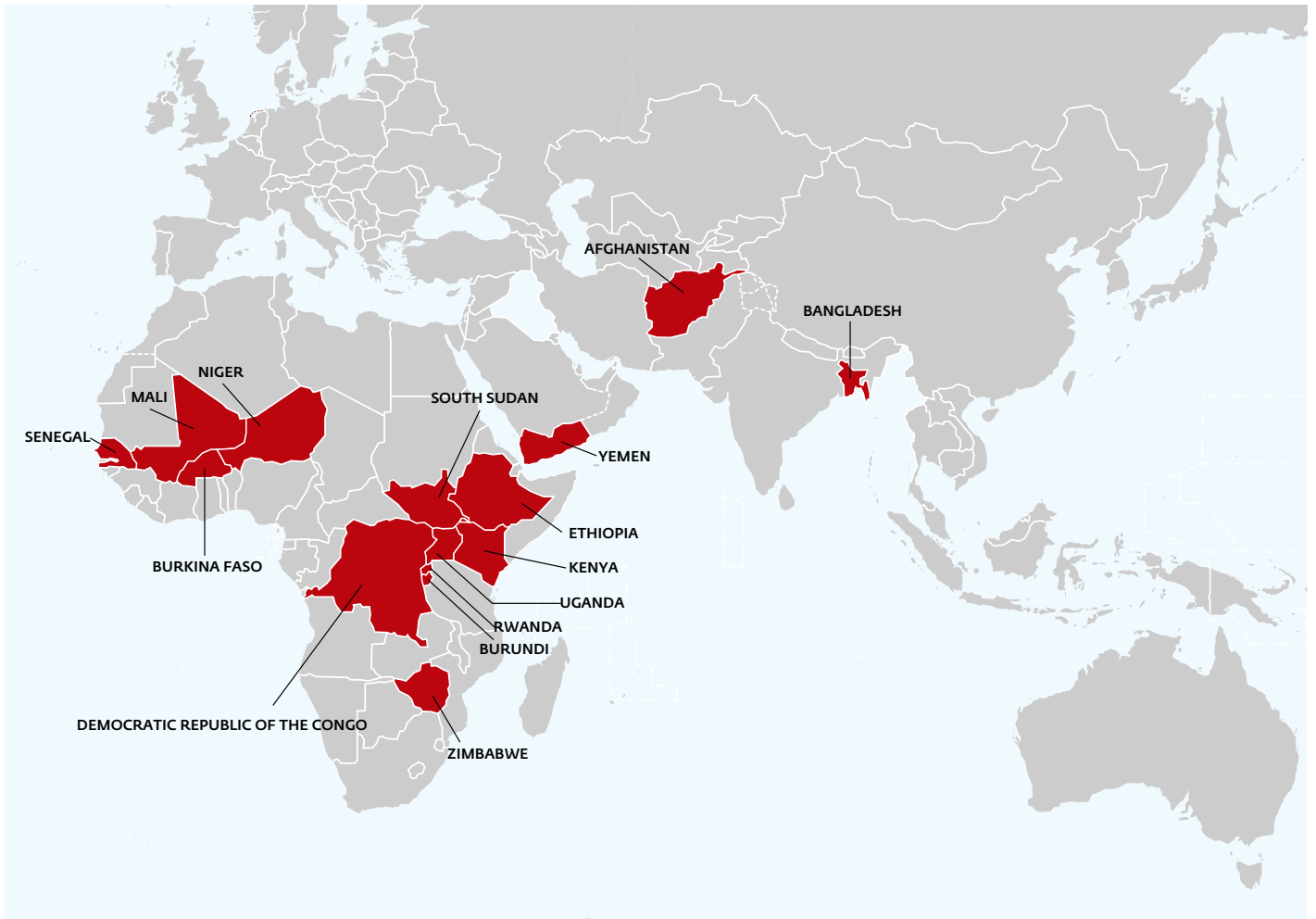
Furthermore, Cordaid's membership of the faith-based networks Caritas, CIDSE and ACT Alliance, strongly enhances our work. For us, faith is a binding force that connects people across borders and religions, because we know that the universal value of compassion is equally embraced by all religions. Cordaid brings together a diverse set of faith-based networks and leaders rooted in Catholic, Protestant and ecumenical traditions from global to local level. Faith-based organisations have a strong track record in providing health care, education, and other basic services to people who have been marginalised the most. They play an instrumental role in fragile settings by providing material and psychosocial support, supporting peace and reconciliation processes, and by ensuring a continued presence and safety net in contexts where civil society and institutional development is weak or broken down.

Where we work

Our strategic choice is to work in the most fragile countries and contexts where the institutional landscape is scattered, fragmented, or broken by conflicts, and where civil society and civic action is under pressure. We aim to reduce fragility and people's vulnerability where this is most needed and where external solidarity with, and support of actors and their organisations, is pivotal to enhance their roles in creating peaceful, equitable and resilient societies.

We have a presence through our offices in 14 countries, to ensure the quality and effectiveness of our work. We also have a project) registration in Senegal. In addition, our humanitarian mandate enables us to work anywhere in the world where needs outrank locally available coping capabilities.

Our 15 focus countries*

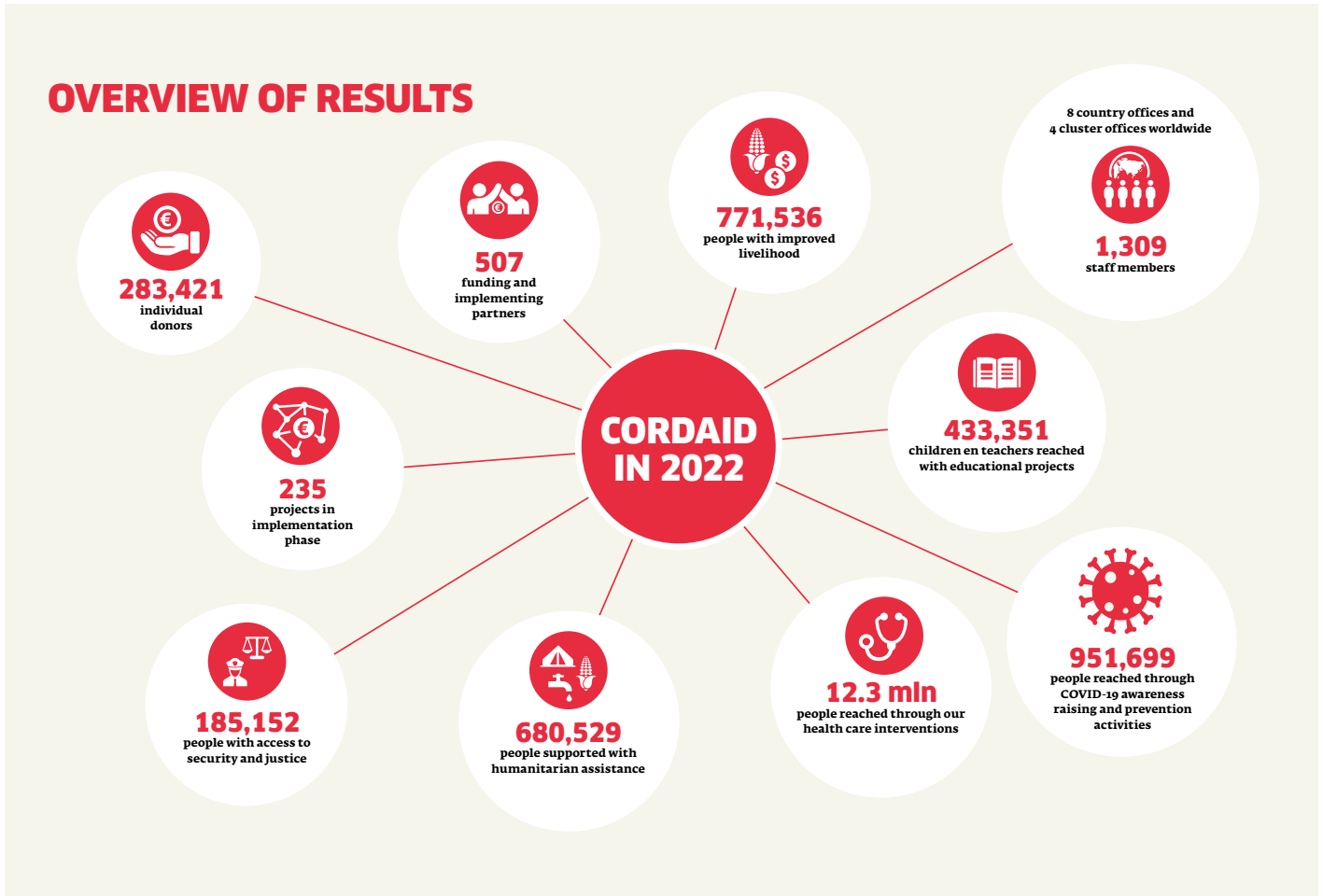


* In the following countries/regions Cordaid is in the process of completing programmes and will end its presence before 2025: Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Syria, Iraq, Nepal, Cambodia, Myanmar and Latin America.

Our presence in the Netherlands

Cordaid puts global interdependence, and global challenges such as poverty, inequalities, the pandemic, climate, and migration, at the heart of its work. We seek to strengthen our support for Dutch initiatives aimed at tackling poverty and exclusion and promoting sustainable development. We also enhance our engagement towards (new) supporters in the Netherlands, resulting in both increased private donations and accelerated stakeholder engagement, and encourage behavioural change. We strengthen our advocacy with Dutch and EU-policymakers on international development policies. We coordinate with Dutch non-governmental organisations and faith-based networks and build new strategic partnerships with Dutch stakeholders that can support us in our ambitions.

Overview of results. Cordaid In 2022



4. OUR THEORY OF CHANGE: LOCALLY-LED SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Our Theory of Change is informed by our analysis of the fundamental needs of people living in fragile contexts, and by our expertise and track record. It stems directly from our vision of peaceful, equitable and resilient societies.

People living in fragile contexts are confronted with a multitude of challenges. They are entitled to an enabling environment that supports them in their pursuit of health, education, safety, justice, income, and food, needed for all to live life in a dignified and healthy way. Only if we address these challenges holistically can we break the vicious cycle of fragility.

Cordaid works towards strengthened and transformed systems that benefit underserved people in fragile and conflict-affected settings. This involves strengthening of basic service systems to be inclusive, sustainable, equitable, and effective so people can live a dignified and healthy life in peace.

Locally-led system strengthening

With system strengthening, the purpose or outcomes of the system and its sub-systems, the stakeholders and their interconnectedness need to be considered when identifying interventions at the level of the system where the impact is the strongest. The approach addresses underlying obstacles that constrain access to services and rights, whether these are linked to gender, religion, race, or disability. In doing so we apply a holistic approach, which implies that we are responsive to individual and societal needs in their full diversity, particularly safeguarding access to essential services for those most at risk.

In our view, in system strengthening there should always be a strong focus on subsidiarity and locally-led decision-making. This will structurally shift autonomy to those who can make optimal choices within their context, engaging line ministries, institutions, communities and stakeholders and creating more equitable outcomes at the level of the local service providers and the population.

Other criteria for system strengthening actions are that they should not strengthen certain elements of the system at the expense of other elements, and that Cordaid does not take up roles and responsibilities for which local actors are already in existence and functioning. Furthermore, Cordaid strives for replicability, scalability, accountability (upward and downward), and transparency, as well as a plausible strategy for long-term sustainability.

By focusing on these strengthening of systems for improved and inclusive access, we aspire for a long-term impact for the better of entire populations in fragile settings. Without equitable access to these critical services, entire generations are at risk of being thrown into even deeper spirals of poverty and exclusion. Based on our expertise and proven track record, we will further develop and innovate our system strengthening approaches such as (but not exclusively) results-based financing, to accelerate access to quality services for all.

Further reading

[System strengthening: the sustainable way forward - Cordaid International](#)

Results-based financing






Results-based financing (RBF) is both a resource mobilisation and allocation approach as well as a social accountability mechanism. It is one of Cordaid's most successful strategies used to improve the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of development programmes by tying payments to pre-agreed outcomes.

RBF ensures the participation of multi-stakeholders, notably that of line ministries of health, education, justice, and agriculture, as well as the users of these services and encourages the involvement of communities. We apply RBF to align public procurement to human capital development, reflected by (among others) child survival and school enrolment. We do so by incentivising services that are linked to desired outcomes, for instance, safe deliveries in hospitals, women with access to prenatal care and sexual and reproductive health services, immunisation, nutrition of children, and fair legal treatment of people who are accused. A typical RBF contract includes a bonus for satisfactory and reliable performance, which hospitals and schools can re-invest in business development, staff incentives and other activities. Through the application of RBF, the allocation and effectiveness of budgets is closely monitored.

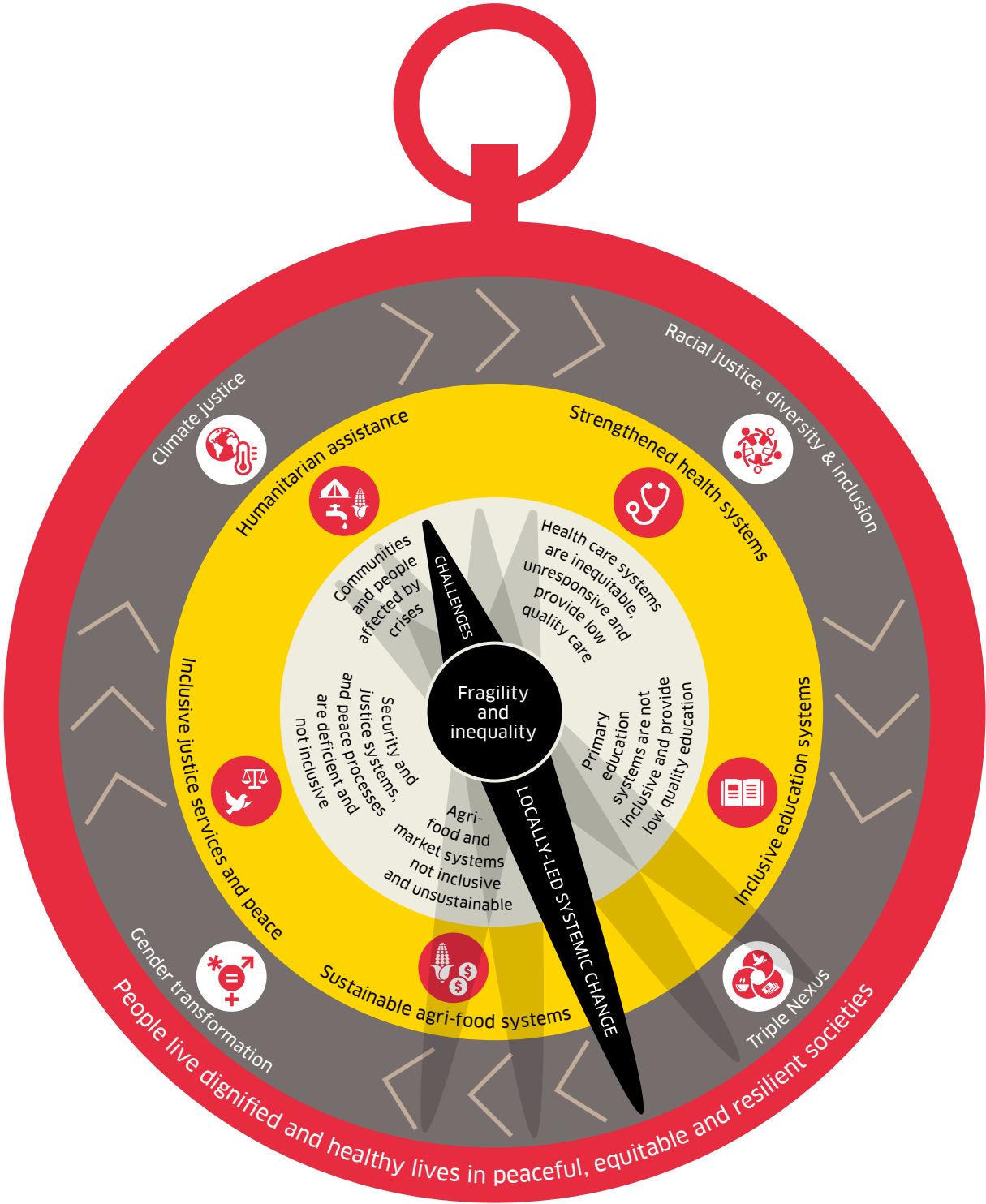
Cordaid first applied the RBF approach as part of a public health project in Rwanda in 2002, and expanded it later to strengthen health, education, and justice systems in several African countries. We recently started exploring expanding its scope to the agri-food sector.

Five pathways of change

We assume our responsibility by addressing and undoing underlying barriers (in weak functioning systems), whether environmental, social, or institutional, across five pathways of change (and four cross-cutting results areas that are addressed in chapter 5), that guide our choices of where, how, and with whom we work. These encompass the delivery of:

-  Fair structures for health care, with a focus on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) including HIV/AIDS, and Mental Health and Psycho Social Support (MHPSS), as healthy populations (notably mothers and children) are essential for participation in school and society.
-  Strengthened inclusive education services, notably for girls and other underserved populations. Education for children is our human capital and therefore the base for all further development processes.
-  Fair and inclusive justice systems and peace for growing stability and human security as a fundament upon which societies can thrive and further develop.
-  Improved agri-food systems, which in turn fosters peace and adds to societies' resilience and allows households to earn a living.
-  The fifth pathway of Cordaid is humanitarian assistance. It runs parallel with and adds to the four other pathways. Our Triple Nexus approach (see 5.1) affirms and further builds upon the interrelationships between the development-oriented and the humanitarian assistance objectives.

To ensure that the improvements and changes we foster are sustained, we rely on the inclusivity, leadership and resilience of communities, and on that, of public and private partners. By working at scale, increasingly with our partners in the lead, systemic approaches contribute to lasting improvements for many, notably for those who have been marginalised the most.



The compass visualises Cordaid's Theory of Change. Using a locally led systemic change approach, we aim for societies where people live dignified and healthy lives in peaceful, equitable and resilient societies.

4.1 HEALTH SYSTEM STRENGTHENING



Photo: Adriana Parejo Pagador / Cordaid (2023)

Jackline Wani is the clinical officer in Curei Primary Health Care Centre in of Juba, specialising in tuberculosis. “I chose to work on tuberculosis because I see my people suffering and this is my way to help them.”

Cordaid trains medical staff and provides medicine for HIV and tuberculosis to health facilities across the country. We also equip laboratories with microscopes and GeneXpert, a machine that detects infectious diseases.

Ambition

Access to health care is a human right. Especially in fragile societies and protracted crisis situations, strengthening or restoring health service delivery and governance institutions provides the basis for socio-economic development. Health is conducive to living a life of dignity. As such, access to health care is a basic human right. Yet, COVID-19 has exposed and further magnified the huge inequities in health status and life expectancy across the world. Good individual and community health is irrefutably intertwined with socio-economic development. Therefore, we expand access to quality health care for underserved and vulnerable people in fragile and conflict-affected settings. This entails strengthening inclusive, equitable and effective health systems that offer universal health coverage. As such, we address underlying obstacles that restrict access to health care, whether these are linked to gender, religion, race, or disability.



Our approach

Given the health situation in the fragile countries we work in, our health interventions particularly address the needs of women and girls, as well as of those suffering from neglected diseases. Our approaches include the following:

- Applying a health system strengthening approach through a results-based financing method, allowing for sustainable and impactful change for vulnerable populations, all in conjunction with professionals and communities directly involved.
- Working at scale, so that we can contribute significantly to address health care needs resulting from neglected diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, and other communicable diseases.
- Advocating sexual and reproductive health needs and rights and putting emphasis on the needs of adolescents and youth. Paying particular attention to the prevention of gender-based violence.
- Setting up and ensuring the delivery of mental health care and psychosocial support, which goes hand in hand with training of professionals.

The indicators of this pathway contribute to SDGs



Project examples

[Health care in Ethiopia](#)

[Better health care for disaster-stricken communities in South Sudan](#)

4.2 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEMS



Photo Niels van Laar (2023)

The challenges of Kawaaga Primary School in the heart of Uganda were countless in 2020. The building was dilapidated, the school desks were broken, and there were no toilets, no clean water and no electricity. Three years later thanks to a results-based financing programme the building and its facilities have been renovated, and the education quality improved.

“I like school very much, says 14-year-old Shenita Nabirye. “It helped me figure out what I want to do later in life. Now I can chase my dream and become a doctor.”

Ambition

Education is a foundation for life and a gateway for personal, social, and economic development. However, more than 250 million children and youth worldwide are not in school, and among those in school, many fail to reach minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics due to a poor learning environment. We therefore aim to improve both access to primary schools, as well as the quality of education. In doing so, we address the education backlog caused by COVID-19 which severely impacted education opportunities. We make extra effort to ensure that school infrastructures are restored, school feeding programs resumed, and girls and children from poor families get enrolled or re-enrolled in schools.



Our approach

To structurally increase access to education, notably for girls, and meanwhile improve the quality of the learning environment, we carry out the following:

- Applying results-based financing as a method to strengthen the education system. We do this by partnering with all actors involved, including the ministry of education, school inspectors and staff, and communities including the children's parents.
- Paying particular attention to a safe and stimulating learning environments, which requires adequate water and sanitation facilities and school feeding programs.
- Increasing youth employability and fostering healthy economies by setting up and providing market-oriented training within and outside the formal school system (Technical Vocational Education and Training, or TVET).

The indicators of this pathway contribute to SDGs



Project example

[Improving primary education in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#)

[Working towards a better primary education system in Uganda](#)

4.3 SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS



Photo: Frameln Productions (2021)

In the coastal areas of Bangladesh Cordaid trained 10,000 farmers in saline agriculture. By learning how to grow salt-tolerant crops on land that has been damaged by saltwater, smallholder farmers like Abul Aziz can make their fallow, saline soil fertile again, grow sufficient food for the community and generate an income.

Ambition

Two billion people in fragile and conflict-affected settings do not have regular access to food. Of these people, one in three experiences severe food insecurity. Smallholder farmers and workers, pivotal in addressing this food crisis, often live below the poverty line. Climate change, pandemics and a growing world population are causing the recent relapse in food and nutrition security.

Cordaid's ambition is to support communities to secure improved access to sufficient, adequate, and nutritious food, with enhanced utilisation and stability of food availability. We see access to food as a right, in line with the stance of the United Nations and its member states. By strengthening the agri-food sector, we will make food systems stronger and resilient to climate change, and help create decent jobs, living wages and economic growth. We support smallholder farmers to access finance and build, together with other stakeholders, inclusive market systems allowing them a decent and fair income or living wage.



Digitalisation

The use of digital tools is not a goal, but a means to achieve our programmatic objectives. When used in a safe and inclusive manner, digital technologies can empower individuals and communities and contribute to greater public accountability. Our approach to digitalisation is therefore strongly rooted in rights-based approaches and will be promoted in all our work.

We constantly seek to unleash social and technical innovations to address the real needs of low-income communities. We introduce digital tools in early warning systems that are used in situations of conflict and disasters. We connect smallholder farmers with digital platforms to enable them to make faster and better farming decisions and gain access to inputs and markets. Information and communication technologies can help lower transaction costs for technical and financial service providers working with low-income groups, remote communities, and other marginalised clients. In our system strengthening efforts for health and education we apply smart paper technology to make data and payment processing faster and more efficient.

Our approach

In our agri-food system strengthening approach in fragile settings we:

- Promote empowerment and self-organisation of food system actors, particularly marginalised groups, smallholder farmers, women, and youth with a view to climate resilient food and nutrition security.
- Strengthen the mutually reinforcing link between economic development and agri-food activities, through production, income generation, and accessing markets.
- Enable inclusive access to finance and services for agri-food entrepreneurs and farmers.
- Build public-private partnerships to accelerate the agri-food market sector.

The indicators of this pathway contribute to SDGs



Project examples

[Better access to data, equipment and loans for Rwandan famers](#)

[The Salt Solution: growing salt-tolerant vegetables in Bangladesh](#)

4.4 INCLUSIVE JUSTICE SERVICES AND PEACE



Photo Mickael Franci / Cordaid (2019)

Chimne Èndjizekane runs a centre for women affected by sexual violence in the roughest neighbourhood of Bangui in the Central African Republic. The abuse against women – often girls still – is usually hushed up. Chimne’s team provides food and refers to doctors when needed. And it documents and starts legal cases against perpetrators.

Cordaid has worked 30 years in the Central African Republic. As of 2024, we are leaving the country. Partner organisations linked to the Caritas family will continue to support the population.

Ambition

Strengthening justice systems in fragile settings is an important development challenge, for without justice and security other public goods and services cannot be provided or accessed. Moreover, a legitimate rule of law and a vibrant civil society are preconditions for meaningful peace and development. Meeting security and justice needs is crucial for the development of Cordaid’s programming.

People and organisations addressing urgent needs and challenges in their own societies play an indispensable role in processes towards peace and reconciliation. However, their role is often neglected or minimised. This is particularly true for women and youth. It is our ambition to increase and strengthen the participation of these locally-led organisations and especially of women and youth in conflict prevention and reconciliation processes. By addressing root causes of conflict, these stakeholders support sustainable solutions with a lasting impact. Furthermore, fair and sustainable justice systems can only be achieved by approaching development and peacebuilding as a nexus. We continue to collaborate with a broad spectrum of actors, including national and local governments, communities, and civil society organisations.



To maximise the results of our efforts on peace we organise our work under three banners:

- Women, peace, and security, following United Nations Resolution 1325 and successive resolutions.
- Youth, peace, and security.
- Enhancing capabilities to peacefully resolve conflicts and bolster social cohesion.

The inclusion of young people is crucial to contribute to conflict prevention and to foster social cohesion. Youngsters in our programs are bridge builders and drivers of positive social change. They often have good insight into practices that are harmful or favourable to peace and security in their societies. Often, these are the same practices that can be detrimental or conducive to (young) women's security and gender equality.

Faith-based actors, their organisations, and the networks in which they operate often play a significant role in resolving conflicts and strengthening social cohesion. In our work and through our participation in these faith-based networks we aim to further enhance the capabilities of faith actors.

Our approach

We apply multiple strategies that are conducted in conjunction, among which are the following:

- Promoting and advocating for equitable policies and legislation to be enacted and implemented to address inequities and the exclusion of vulnerable groups from justice services
- Strengthening justice systems in partnership with communities and civil society organisations (CSOs) to improve the quality and inclusivity of public services.
- Enhancing the capacity of justice workers in volume and quality so that public systems and service provision will become more accessible and effective.
- Supporting CSOs representing the interests of the most excluded; their voice and agency is crucial, and they need to be fully engaged in public system strengthening to improve access to responsive justice services.
- Building relationships with CSOs, youth, and women interest groups to voice their concerns and influence legislation and policies, so that communities can hold authorities accountable.
- Cordaid's lobby and advocacy efforts emphasise the need for peace and reconciliation processes to be as inclusive and participatory as possible. We defend the space that is needed for civil society actors to voice their concerns and needs and to act upon them without repercussions. We also enhance efforts and initiatives to peacefully resolve conflicts and to bolster social cohesion.

The indicators of this pathway contribute to SDGs



Project examples

[Just Future Alliance](#)

[Displaced by war, driven by peace](#)

4.5 HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE



Photo: Joost Bastmeijer, DRA Joint Response (2021)

Chaltu, 22-year-old mother, is very happy with access to clean water. “We used to use the river water because we had no choice, but we often had abdominal pain, itching or giardiasis, an infection of the gut.”

Cordaid, together with other organisations within the Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA), provided emergency aid in Ethiopia in 2021. They have handed out soap, water filters and hygiene kits; repaired and built new health centers, and water facilities at clinics, schools and other public places.

Ambition

The sheer scale, as well as the diversity of challenges faced by people living in conflict-afflicted regions, and the complexity that goes with it, requires moving beyond a one-size-fits-all solution. Our humanitarian mandate guides us to support those people that are most marginalised and need assistance most, especially in hard-to-reach areas. We tap into our broader networks, such as Caritas and the ACT Alliance, to ensure that we can act promptly.

Besides direct humanitarian assistance to people in acute and protracted crises, we also invest in emergency preparedness of partners and communities so that they can better cope with (future) hazards. Of equal importance is our work on resilient recovery, rebuilding through investing in inclusive peace and reconciliation, mental health and psychosocial support, and the notion of ‘building back better’. All our humanitarian work is thus fully aligned with the ‘Triple Nexus approach’ (see section 5.1).



Our approach

Building on our established humanitarian assistance frameworks, our humanitarian actions are linked to sustainable development approaches. We focus on access to basic livelihood needs, including water supply, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), food security, emergency shelter and non-food items like soap and other hygienic products, and health services, including mental health and psychosocial support. Our choices on where to channel support are guided by the following principles:

- Prioritising the most vulnerable people and those who need humanitarian assistance the most, including people living in hard-to-reach areas.
- Delivering support through cash-based approaches wherever possible.
- Mainstreaming protection in all our interventions.
- Working on/through and building up relationships with partners. In line with the [Grand Bargain](#), the 2016 agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organisations, our local partners are increasingly leading humanitarian action.

We live up to the Core Humanitarian Standard



Project examples

[Locally-led humanitarian assistance](#)

[Strengthening local organisations to respond effectively to emergencies](#)

5. FOUR CROSS-CUTTING RESULTS AREAS

Our work is dynamic, our actions and ways of working adapt to societal developments. What we do stems from former experiences and decisions, learnings over time and a solid analysis of the world around us. We do not act in isolation. Recognising major trends and developments in our global context, we strategically choose to embed four cross-cutting results areas in everything that we do, be it our programming or our (internal) operations. Because accounting for these topics makes the results in our thematic strategies more sustainable, relevant and impactful. All is shaped to be a glimpse of the future that we envision, a more peaceful, equitable and resilient world.



5.1 Triple Nexus

In fragile settings where the institutional landscape is often underdeveloped, partial and isolated responses are less sustainable than integrated approaches. The Triple Nexus approach recognises this fact and aims at more programmatic interconnected action and a context-specific balanced cooperation between specialist approaches and overarching strategies. It aims at linking relief and humanitarian assistance to rehabilitation, development, and peace. Its underlying principle of seeking connections and mutual re-enforcing between programmes and activities informs and directs all Cordaid's work.

Interconnecting the four pathways of change ensures that while responding to urgent humanitarian crises, foundations for inclusive and sustainable development are built. This Triple Nexus approach accelerates transformative change by supporting excluded groups and communities to articulate their interests and influence decision-making processes and governance frameworks. It strengthens private and public institutions to deliver quality and inclusive services to all.

We adopt a multifaceted lens to address access to basic services, for instance through school feeding programmes that encourage procurement of locally produced and nutritious food while securing the livelihoods of farmers and businesses. This allows Cordaid to build trust and to lay the groundwork for dialogue processes to strengthen rights-based and inclusive governance processes. This contributes to post-conflict reconstruction efforts and increases the chance of sustainable peace and security. Cordaid thus addresses immediate humanitarian needs for food, health, shelter, and other crisis support, while simultaneously exploring how to strengthen the resilience of agri-food systems and other structures. We do so while understanding underlying power dynamics, cultural practices (including gender relations), and the needs of key groups such as internally displaced persons and their host communities.



5.2 Climate justice

While we are all impacted by the climate crisis and environmental degradation, the impact is particularly devastating for individuals and communities who have limited resources and capacities to adapt and become more resilient. In the coming years, unequal exposure to climate change, coupled with the excessive costs of mitigation and adaptation measures, is expected to further increase tensions among countries and between people.

As an organisation, we contribute to global goals on climate action and advocate for climate justice. We have set ourselves the target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2028 and becoming climate positive by 2030. Our effort is to reduce Cordaid's own carbon footprint and to compensate for our remaining carbon emissions. To achieve this, we have adopted a transformative approach that links science, local knowledge, and individual agencies to change attitudes that have a negative impact on the climate and the environment.

FairClimateFund

FairClimateFund is a social venture established in 2009, of which Cordaid is the sole shareholder. Its mission is to work towards a fair climate where those who contribute most to climate change invest in CO₂ reduction projects that benefit people who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Together with its partners, FairClimateFund focuses on sustainable household energy projects and nature-based solutions. These climate projects reduce CO₂ emissions and deforestation and improve the living conditions for the communities we work with.

We actively pursue sustainability principles across all our activities, by:

- Applying a climate and environment lens to all our programming (humanitarian and development), and operational work, leading to mitigating and adaptive measures in all our projects and operations to offset and reduce our climate and environmental footprint.
- Supporting actors in the countries we work in to assess climate and related (conflict) risk and embedding mitigation and adaptation measures in all their programming.
- Recognising that root causes for climate change lie in the Global North which implies taking into consideration geographical power dynamics and global power imbalances in our climate actions and acting on that.



5.3 Gender transformation

Our ambition is to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women, men, and non-binary people throughout our organisation and all our work. Our intersectional gender transformative strategy is fully incorporated into the DNA of our organisation and is at the core of our work.

Human, and axiomatically, women's rights are non-negotiable. Our work is therefore rights-based. Feminism (the belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes) is engrained in all we do. We are intuitively and consistently challenging gender inequity by ensuring that everyone can meaningfully participate in our organisation, programmes and in society. And we actively challenge the harmful gender norms, values and roles that persist. We promote equitable positions of social and political influence for women, men, girls and boys in communities and broader society, and address power inequities between persons of different genders.

We do this from an intersectional perspective, considering all elements that hinder equal opportunities and ensuring we tackle harmful traditional structures and practices across our societies. Our working premise is that, when all groups participate equally, societies thrive. We foster mutual reinforcement between our gender transformative action approach and our work on racial justice, diversity, and inclusion.



5.4 Racial justice, diversity, and inclusion

A world without racial justice can never be a just world. For a shift in power, it is essential to embrace diversity and inclusion. These three necessities intersect our four pathways of change and underly our work on locally-led development and gender transformation. They also feed into our climate and ecological agendas as the people who are suffering the most from climate change are the ones that suffer most from exclusion and discrimination. Their voices must be heard. Diversity is part and parcel of our efforts to build peaceful, equitable and resilient societies.

Within Cordaid's organisational setup, racial justice, diversity, and inclusion are high on the agenda. Equity in relationships, job opportunities that promote diversity, combating implicit and explicit discrimination and racism, and awareness raising are critical. Explicit policies are developed to make sure that our organisational setup and our working relations mirror the values of our vision and mission. Our narratives and our language reflect our conviction. Discussions around shifting the power that produce inclusive, non-racist language further stimulate these efforts.

6. A FIT-FOR-PURPOSE ORGANISATION

Our organisational setup and operations are guided by four core values that articulate our intrinsic drive: accountability, sustainability, respect, and diversity & inclusion. We are eager to translate them into practice for our daily actions. They reflect our concern for human dignity, our compassion and care for the earth.



ACCOUNTABILITY

We take responsibility for our actions, behaviours, performance, and decisions in a transparent and trusting manner, and we hold others accountable for theirs too.



SUSTAINABILITY

We are aware of and feel responsible for the social, economic, and ecological needs of present and future generations. Sustainability is paramount in everything we do.



RESPECT

We empathise with the interests of others, and accept people for who they are, recognising their rights and desires, so they feel safe and are free to express themselves.



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We believe in the unique contribution each person can make, and include everyone equally regardless of their background, orientation, or profile.

CORDAID VALUES

Organisational priorities

Environmental and climate crises, pandemics, and forced migration of an unprecedented scale all expose the fragility and interdependence within our world. Delivering our mission of achieving visible and lasting impact in some of the world's most complex settings requires an agile organisational structure, stemming from a locally-led mindset. We need to continuously learn from new experiences while not losing sight of our core mission. At the same time, we need to understand the diverse and dynamic contexts in which we work and to match the pace of our partners, while delivering on our global mission.

In our daily work, and in view of our ambition to work in a locally-led way, we commit ourselves to the following:

- **Be agile and adaptable**

We want our decision-making to be timely, transparent, and cost-effective at all levels. We have clear management roles and responsibilities and avoid duplication.

- **Be accountable**

We maintain the highest standards of accountability to all our external stakeholders, including our donors and the communities we work with. Of equal importance is our accountability to banks, insurance companies and external auditors, such as the ISO/Partos 9001:2015 standard. Compliance with internal policies and commitments are structurally monitored and enforced. Mechanisms to address non-compliance are put in place.

- **Manage risks well**

We strengthen risk management at all levels of our organisation. Based on our focus in fragile settings and the power shift induced by our locally-led development agenda, we are performing strategic risk analyses to determine specific objectives to address and mitigate high-level risks.

■ Focus on people

We believe that our organisational culture and human resources should reflect the diversity of the society in which we operate, and illustrate parity in terms of gender, disability, religion, and ethnicity. We empower our staff to do their work with professional freedom and support professional development. Our goal is to transition the majority of executive and management positions to staff in the countries in which we operate.

■ Measure impact

A focus on continuous and iterative learning is at the heart of our work. For that we need to be a data-informed organisation. We therefore continue to develop efficient digital tools and management systems to assist and improve organisation-wide decision-making, learning and innovation. Furthermore, we promote a culture of open data and transparency, following international standards such as the General Data Protection Regulation.

The ambitions described in this Compass are driven by our global mission and will serve as a benchmark while measuring our progress.

ABOUT CORDAID

Cordaid is a value-based international development and emergency relief organisation, based in the Netherlands with offices in 14 countries. We work in and on fragility and support communities in their efforts to improve health care, education, food security, and justice. Where disaster strikes, we offer humanitarian assistance.

Cordaid is deeply rooted in the Dutch society with more than 250.000 private donors. The Christian values of human dignity, justice, compassion and care for the planet guide us in our work. Cordaid is a founding member of Caritas, CIDSE and ACT Alliance.

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