

# Help a Child compass

*Charting a course for the next ten years ahead*

2025-2034







# Preface

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When sailing on a wild and unpredictable ocean, with ever changing winds and shifting currents, you need to have a compass and a clear sense of direction on which harbour you want to reach and how to plot your course. This document aims to be that compass for Help a Child for the next 10 years ahead. It describes the harbour we want to reach and the navigating tools we want to use to get there.

## **CHANGING WINDS AND SHIFTING CURRENTS**

In preparation on our journey, we have – through different analyses – made an inventory of the changing winds and shifting currents that shape the ocean that we need to navigate. In this document we want to keep them in mind, but at the same time stay true to ourselves and our principles as we plot our course.

## **OUR HARBOUR**

In ten years' time Help a Child wants to become even more relevant, sustainable and better able to achieve our mission in helping more children who need our help the most as we want every child – regardless of their social, political, religious, ethnic or economic background – to have a life in dignity, with love and with a promising future.

## **OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

When charting our course, the following principles should give us guidance.

### **Sustainable impact**

Help a Child creates sustainable Impact for children. We want to support children living in poverty and crises to have a better future. We achieve this by empowering our target groups, enabling them to independently enhance their living conditions and increase their resilience and coping mechanisms to deal with the crises they face.

### **Empower people**

As a Christian organization, we believe that every human being and every child is uniquely created in the image of God. All our efforts need to result in people who have the strength and perspective to improve their own situation and the confidence to develop within their own context.

## Holistic care

Help a Child understands that poverty and crisis are multidimensional, therefore we believe in holistic approaches. Providing children with a better future is a comprehensive goal, encompassing multiple domains. We support children to be Healthy & Strong, Educated for Life, Social & Emotionally Developed and living with Hope & Dignity. As an organization, we focus on what we do best and cooperate with other actors to achieve the rest.

## Engage our Constituency

Our reason to exist is children in need, our right to exist is our constituency. To engage people in the Netherlands in our work is crucial in a world in which we are connected as brothers and sisters. As an organization we feel the obligation, due to our shared values of compassion and love, to create awareness and to function as a bridge between the families in the Netherlands and families in need worldwide.

## Our motivation

We believe that the motivation with which we do our work makes a difference. As Help a Child colleagues we are inspired to love, called to justice, moved to mercy, invited to reconciliation, motivated to stewardship and dependent on God. These Christian principles inspire us to give our best in all circumstances.





# Changing winds and shifting currents

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We are writing this strategy in a period of insecurity and polarization. The wars in Ukraine and in Gaza are raging on and the world powers are clashing. As a result, the population in the Netherlands (but similarly everywhere in Europa) is increasingly becoming inward-looking. Populism and nationalism are on the rise, and as a result international solidarity is decreasing and severe cutbacks on development aid from the Dutch Government have just been announced.

We are in a time of system crises: a scarcity of natural resources, food, energy, housing, and water. Climate change, worldwide tensions, new donors with new rules, new media, democracies under pressures, and UN organizations that are not functioning well. This is the environment we need to relate to and work with. On the one hand we see increasing globalization, more interconnected, and on the other more conflict and competition.

## **TRENDS GLOBALLY**

When looking at the trends globally you can distinguish the following long-term developments:

- Climate change
- Digital revolution
- Accelerated urbanization
- Demographic change
- Shifting powers
- Raw materials scarcity

We analyzed that the first two trends will (potentially) affect our work in the coming years most significantly, whereas the third most likely will become relevant for us in the coming ten years. They really need our attention in the coming strategic period, but also the other three trends will continue to shape our work as well and we need to monitor them closely.

## **TRENDS IN OUR SECTOR**

Our sector is changing rapidly, which also has an impact on our future. Here are some of the developments that will have an impact in the coming years.

### **Existing and new roles in international cooperation**

The existing roles (service delivery especially in fragile countries, financing, Lobby & Advocacy) will most likely stay and new roles will emerge (like direct funding, cash transfers, social enterprises, playing a broker role, work in the North, Public Private Partnerships, impact investing, high risk innovation investing, international Lobby & Advocacy, new media, AI). This calls for changes in the aid system and will have consequences for our role as well in coming years.

### **Localization**

Localization, shift the power, decolonization of aid are themes that shape the relationship between North and South. We need to respect local and national ownership. With the aim to aid that is better connected to local knowledge and experience, priorities, rhythms, needs and the local cultural environment, and because of that is more effective, efficient, and sustainable. What this exactly means for our role is still hard to predict, but it will affect us.

### **Increased competition for shrinking IF funds**

We see an increased competition for shrinking institutional funds globally which translates into pressure to work in consortia, increasingly accessible through tenders and or grant managers. With limiting conditions (geographically, track record, result based management, payment by results, PMEAL etc.) and an increasing challenge to work cost-effective (the so-called starvation cycle which means you need to subsidize institutional funding with own income). Also, we see a shift of budgets from development aid to emergency relief.

### **Increased competition for private funds**

In the Netherlands we see increasingly that some charities hit the private market and try to push others out, especially international actors trying to buy the market with foreign subsidies and exceedingly high investments in professional marketing tools.

## **TRENDS AMONGST PRIVATE DONORS AND OUR CONSTITUENCY**

Overall, we see a trend toward Impulsive, emotion driven donations, and short-term commitments. Furthermore, people expect something in return for their



giving: events and experiences. Especially younger generations give less and short term.

Our constituency base sees a steady decline in the number of Christian donors, churches, and schools. At the same time there is a decline in committed giving. As boundaries between churches disappear, younger generations lose a natural connection with Help a Child.

Trends in private fundraising show a focus on innovation and technology. Innovations in online and mobile fundraising become increasingly important; the same is true for harnessing the power of data. Growth in private fundraising income is expected through e-mail and marketing automation where it becomes increasingly important to approach the donor individually. With an aging population a growth in inheritances can be expected, which can only be accessed if an organization has established a good relationship with its constituency.

### **TRANSFORM, DIE WELL, DIE BADLY**

The trends above give us a few choices: to transform, to die well or to die badly.

**Transform:** to become more relevant, sustainable, and better able to achieve the mission, with a more focused mandate, role, niche that communities want and what the wider movement wants from you.

**Die well:** merging, spinning out or giving away expertise, programmes and other assets to partners, other NGOs, other parts of civil society in the Global South of Global North so that they can continue the mission.

**Die badly:** leaving no assets for other parts of the movement to build on.

It is our desire to go through the necessary transformation process successfully and stay relevant for children and families in need.





# Strategic **directions**

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Based on our desire to learn how to create more impact for more children in need, our desire to stay relevant in a world that asks for scale, innovation, and impact, and looking at the trends we observed in Our context, we have formulated four main strategic directions.

- Create more impact for more children in need
- Strengthen our local allies
- Help children who need our help the most
- Be a bridge between two worlds

## **CREATE MORE IMPACT FOR MORE CHILDREN IN NEED**

The needs of children are increasing, but also the funding gap is increasing. To address this, we must step up our efforts in different ways. At the same time, we need to mitigate the trends that potentially diminish us creating more impact for more children.

### **Organizational scale**

If we are eager to help significantly more children in the next ten years, if we want to continue with our principle of using the income from our constituency to attract other income, and if we want to survive the expected shake-out in our sector, we need to scale as an organization. In ten years' time we want to **be part of a new organization** built on like-minded Christian organizations with the scale of at least an income of 150 million euros, provided that new organization gives us adequate space to reach our harbour and using our guiding principles in getting there.

### **Programmatic scale**

To have sustainable impact and provide relevant lifesaving humanitarian aid at scale we need to focus on our areas of expertise and the way we deliver them.

We can no longer do everything for everybody. **We focus on the impact on the young child** (0–6) and our interventions should as much as possible have a clear and **direct impact** on those children. We will recalibrate our current expertise areas considering the demands of the coming years.

Similarly, we will **review our current CCCD programs**. The time of a one-size-fits-all approach is over, and we need to adapt to the changes in the countries we work in but also deal with the consequences of our choices like the shift to fragile countries and working integrative together with other organizations.

### **Innovative scale and acceleration**

In a changing world and with the digital revolution in mind, the old answers may not be relevant anymore in the future. We want to continue to explore innovative approaches that help accelerate or scale the impact of our work.

### **Programmatic quality**

More impact is not only reached through scale but also through more quality. We want to give our best for children in need, therefore we will **continue to invest in the quality of our work**. We want to hold ourselves accountable for that quality by continually measuring, evaluating, and improving our work so that we have a just cause to say that our work is making a difference in the lives of children in need.

### **Mitigating effects of climate change**

We want to make sure that our efforts to reach impact for children is not damaged by other factors. We know that the impact of climate change can be huge for the areas that we work in. Therefore, we must **proactively mitigate the effects of climate change** in our project areas, whilst at the same time make sure that we stay a child focused organization.

### **Balance of funding streams whilst achieving scale**

To keep our strategic independence and the ability to make our own choices we want to have a healthy balance in our own income and the income of others. This balance should be **at least 40% own income vs 60% other income**. Also, the other income (like institutional funding) should not be too heavily dependent on a single donor. Individual donors should **not contribute more than 1/3** to the total of our other income. Furthermore, we always keep in mind that scaling is not a goal in itself, but only an instrument to reach the harbour.





### **Unrestricted income**

To create more impact for more children in need, having unrestricted funding is crucial. We see the further growth of **our charity shops** as the most promising and effective way of achieving that and therefore we will put our efforts to make them grow. In the next ten years we want to continue to grow with at least **2 shops per year** thus contributing significantly to our own (unrestricted) income stream.

### **STRENGTHEN OUR LOCAL ALLIES**

Believing in the strength of the people we work with, to empower them, and to achieve sustainable impact eventually also has consequences for the way we work with our partners in the countries we work in and how we relate to them. Working in long term partnerships with our partners has been in our DNA since our founding days in 1968. We want to reconnect to that heritage.

### **Partnership principles**

We have developed partnership principles for strategic implementing partners that guide us in our way forward:

- We believe in long-lasting partnerships with mutual trust and respect. We are loyal and honest and expect the same from our partners so that our partnership transcends a funding relationship.
- Having a Help a Child local presence is not a goal in itself.

We want to be in a country as long as our presence has an added value. We are there temporarily.

- We do not compete with our local partners for resources.
- We want to empower our local partners to sustain the work after we have left.

### **Partner sustainability**

To make sure that our partners can sustain the work after we have left, it is important that we invest in **both capacity strengthening and financial sustainability** of our partners. We want to develop a partnership journey that allows us to make the most of our time of working together and that results in equipped partners that are ready to take on the full responsibility after we have left.

### **Decentralization**

Our partners are – as much as possible – the main channel for reaching and helping children in need. This varies from country to country but should still be our aim. This also means that our country offices need to take on a supporting role towards partners. We feel we have focused too much on decentralization in the past strategy period. We want to strengthen the concept that as Help a Child Global Office and Help a Child Country Offices **we are one organization** working together for children in need and complement each other. This is not only right as a principle, but also unavoidable in a time with decreasing means to pay for overheads.

### **Local government**

In a time where more Southern governments are weary of Western involvement, it is important to keep good and close relationships with (local) governments. For this reason, but also because the outcomes will be more sustainable, we need to become more proactive in engaging with them both at national and subnational levels.

### **Child centred**

Localization does not stop with partners or local government, but also involves children. For us to be a truly child centred organization we need to step up our game in the way we relate to the children in our projects. **Involving children in most aspects of our work** is something we can improve upon and make a higher priority. Our current pilot projects on child-led Monitoring & Evaluation and child-led complaints and feedback systems are good starting points.



## **Our name**

Being called Red een Kind (Save a Child in Dutch) is not in line anymore with our guiding principles. Even though we have built our brand successfully for the last 55 years, we need to reconsider whether our name is future proof and whether we should change to a Dutch version of Help a Child.

## **HELP CHILDREN WHO NEED OUR HELP THE MOST**

### **Geographical choices**

We want to be in the places where children with the most needs are living. Even though there are child needs in the lower middle-income countries we work, the question is valid if we use our resources most impactful in those countries and whether we are preventing the government and the middle classes to take on their responsibilities. Therefore, we want to continue our geographic shift towards fragile countries. Within the next ten years we want to come to **a ratio of 2/3 fragile countries vs 1/3 non-fragile countries.**

### **Urbanization**

Mega trends show a shift towards accelerated urbanization. In the next ten years we want to prepare ourselves to also be relevant towards the needs of children in urban contexts, whilst honouring our guiding principles.

## **BE A BRIDGE BETWEEN TWO WORLDS**

We are a Dutch based Christian organization. And in the next 10 years we will still be a Dutch based Christian organization, as our reason to exist is to serve children in need, but our right to exist is our constituency. To engage people in the Netherlands in our work is crucial in a world in which we are connected as brothers and sisters. Even with a shrinking Christian population in the Netherlands, there are still more than enough like-minded people that share our values and believes to make together a difference for children in need.

### **Being a bridge between two worlds**

We want to be a bridge between the world of the children in need and the world of our constituency. Bridging those worlds also means raising awareness about the consequences of lifestyle choices that our constituency makes for the children we want to help. In the next ten years we want to do so more proactively and more challenging.

## **Charity shops**

In a world with declining international solidarity, we need to engage our constituency on this topic. With the growing number of volunteers in our charity shops we have a wonderful opportunity to make them ambassadors for children in need. Similarly, we want to engage with the customers in the charity shops more proactively as well.

## **Sponsorship alternatives**

There is a growing awareness that there are elements in our sponsorship model that are not doing justice to our guiding principles. Within the next ten years we want to **develop alternatives** that can provide us with the same level of loyal giving that our current sponsorship model provides.

Even though we want to find alternatives for our sponsorship model, we want to keep an essential element of that model and that is the fact that we make the support personal and visible. We aim for transparent and authentic communication that is child-centred and, if possible, child-led.

## **AGILE AND INNOVATIVE**

### **Agile and innovative organizational culture**

We recognize that as an organization we have a flat structure that allows us to be agile, entrepreneurial, and innovative. We are open-minded and eager to learn. These are important qualities for an organization in changing and uncertain times. As we embark on our travels for the next ten years we want to cherish and build on those characteristics.

## **Digital revolution**

The swift progress of technological advancement has initiated a digital revolution. Embracing this digital transformation is crucial to stay competitive in a rapidly changing environment. We want to be in the forefront in utilizing emerging technologies to create impact, streamline processes, improve collaboration, and boost efficiency.

Achieving this requires a collective endeavor to upskill and cultivate a culture of digital literacy and innovation. We foster a culture of continuous learning and development and encourage employees to seek out new skills, knowledge, and experiences, both within and outside their current roles. We invest in training programs, workshops, and resources that support ongoing growth and development.





[www.helpachild.org](http://www.helpachild.org)