

Help's Strategy

Help that keeps coming.

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Help

Introduction

As an internationally active non-governmental organisation (NGO), Help – Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe has **more than 40 years' experience in humanitarian aid and development cooperation**. Since our establishment in July 1981, we have provided effective emergency aid in acute crises and disasters while simultaneously fighting hardship, poverty and social injustice worldwide and creating long-term opportunities.

In our work, we always follow our **fundamental principle of helping people to help themselves**. This means that we enable people to improve their life situation through their own efforts in all of our projects. Whenever possible, we support people's efforts to take their lives into their own hands and empower them to take action and assume responsibility.

Consistently working with local partners on the ground and empowering them to independently plan and implement humanitarian aid and development cooperation projects are important parts of this fundamental principle. Supporting local civil society is therefore also a key component of our work. **Our principle of helping people to help themselves – a direct translation of our organisation's name (for more than 40 years) – has now become established as a widely utilised approach across the entire field of international cooperation.**

The significance of the principle has become no less relevant – on the contrary. Given the dramatic increase in crises and disasters, global humanitarian need is constantly rising, and more and more people today are dependent on humanitarian aid. Violent and armed conflicts, natural disasters and the dangers of climate change or the risk of global health crises are creating ever-greater challenges for humanitarian aid and making it even more important. In order to develop long-term and sustainable solutions to global problems, development cooperation and projects need to take on more responsibility than before. **Only by developing sustainable solutions and incorporating those affected into their implementation will we succeed in overcoming poverty, hunger and social injustice, fighting climate change and finding long-term answers to the most pressing future questions.**

These growing challenges are highly relevant to the work of Help – Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe. A **forward-looking strategy** will therefore give us the framework that is needed to successfully address these challenges. More than four decades after our foundation, our strategy stands alongside our vision and mission and forms the cornerstone for the transformation and further development that our organisation needs to undertake together with our partners.

Strategy

Global project measures that are geared towards the specific local **needs of the people affected** are the foundation of our effective and sustainable work. At the same time, our successful implementation of projects is dependent upon **our own capacities** in Germany and other countries as well as on **our partners' capacities**.

The development of our strategy was therefore a wide-ranging participatory process that took place across departments and teams in our Bonn management office and involved our experts in the field across the globe – experts who have excellent knowledge of the different regions and countries in which Help is active. The overall strategy was adopted by the Members' Meeting in 2020.

Our work is guided by the **following vision**:

Vision

Our vision is a world where hardship, poverty and social injustice have been overcome and everyone can lead independent, self-determined lives in dignity, peace and safety, enjoying equal rights and maintaining harmony with the environment.

Mission

- **Helping people to help themselves is our guiding principle.**
- **We support people struggling with or threatened by crises.**
- **We provide acute emergency aid and strengthen people’s capacity to survive. We also improve living conditions and increase the resilience¹ of people in need worldwide while respecting everyone’s right to fair participation.**
- **Our assistance is needs-based, guided by principles, and environmentally friendly and recognises that people are equal in all their diversity and whatever their circumstances.**
- **We contribute to sustainable change in line with our vision.**

Our mission follows directly from our vision and is closely linked to global challenges. It describes **our guidelines**, which we follow in order to address both growing humanitarian needs and the risk that successes achieved in development work might be lost.

Our mission makes clear that our **fundamental principle of helping people to help themselves (empowerment)** will continue to be our key guiding principle in future – in both our humanitarian aid and in our long-term development cooperation. By improving the living conditions of people in need as quickly as possible and strengthening their resilience and participation, we build the necessary bridges between humanitarian and development-oriented measures at the local level in collaboration with our local partners.

The way we work is specifically guided by the principle of sustainability. This also includes implementing our projects with an environmentally conscious and climate-friendly approach. **Helping people to help themselves for us goes hand in hand with environmental and climate protection.**

¹**Resilience** here refers to people’s ability to overcome difficult life situations and shocks as far as possible through their own efforts and without lasting adverse effects.

Overall strategic goal, courses of action and sub-goals

We have identified an overall strategic goal based on the vision and mission behind our strategy. This overall goal can be used to evaluate the implementation of our strategy on a macro level.

On the one hand, our strategy is geared towards **our external work** and sets the frame for the substance and priorities of our work. On the other hand, our strategy also looks inwards and defines the **processes and structures** that are needed to ensure we can continue our work over the long term, and continue to transform our association in future.

We have therefore identified two **courses of action** based on our overall strategic goal:

- The first course of action describes **the programmatic priorities** for our work.
- The second course of action concerns the ideal **internal organisational framework** for implementing our strategy.

For our organisation as a whole, four sub-goals follow from our overall strategic goal. The first two sub-goals relate to our strategic implementation principles of **helping people to help themselves (empowerment), localisation, sustainability and environmental protection**. The last two sub-goals address the instrumental and structural **cross-cutting issues of quality management and cost-efficiency, regionalisation as well as brand and communication**.



Tackling drought with innovation: in Northeast Syria, Help is strengthening small farmers' livelihoods with hydroponic systems.

**Overall
strategic
goal**

Help is a capable partner of people in crises and of public, institutional and private donors for international humanitarian aid and development cooperation programmes that are aligned with its mission. Help has a visionary organisational and management structure and is guided by its vision and mission in all its activities.

Course of action 1

Help is Germany's leading international aid organisation in the debate on empowerment (helping people to help themselves) and localisation and is an authority on environmentally and climate-friendly project measures.

Course of action 2

Help has strategies, processes and structures that provide the ideal framework for aligning its programmes and further transformation measures with its vision.

**Sub-goal 1:
Empowerment &
localisation**

Help actively promotes empowerment (helping people to help themselves) and localisation in its fields of work, and explicitly aligns these goals with the principles of gender sensitivity and diversity awareness.

**Sub-goal 2:
Sustainability &
environmental protection**

Help is synonymous with needs-based assistance and the sustainable, climate-friendly and environmentally responsible impact of its work.

**Sub-goal 3:
Organisation & structure**

Help has strategies, processes and structures that are fit for the future and clear methods for project implementation.

**Sub-goal 4:
Brand & communication**

Help has a persuasive brand strategy and communicates consistently, both internally and externally.

Sub-goals

Within our organisation, we ensure that the four sub-goals are achieved by implementing various work packages that specifically define the individual priorities for the implementation of our strategy. The current status of the implementation of the work packages and hence our achievement of the sub-goals is regularly reviewed and monitored. This allows us to identify any areas in which we need to adjust our strategy at an early stage.

Sub-goal 1: Empowerment & localisation	Help actively promotes empowerment (helping people to help themselves) and localisation in its fields of work, which are explicitly aligned with the principles of gender sensitivity and diversity awareness.
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Our work focuses on empowering individuals and groups so that they can help themselves and on strengthening our local civil society partner organisations and local institutions.

Empowering individuals and groups means for us that our projects strengthen the social and economic capabilities and resources of the local population as the primary target group. In all our work, it is therefore our goal to put the local people in a position to permanently overcome adversity through their own efforts and lead independent, self-determined lives in peace and in physical, economic and environmental security.

Empowering local civil society partner organisations and local institutions we regard as developing competencies and transferring resources so that our local partner organisations and local institutions have the right capacities to help with rapid responses to adverse local situations and are able to overcome these permanently through their own efforts.

Strengthening these partners and institutions is therefore central to our understanding of **localisation**. As part of this approach to localisation, we will ensure that the majority of the projects in question and the associated project funds can be implemented and utilised by our local partner organisations as directly as possible.

Example 1: Empowering local structures, Mali

Due to the difficult security situation and capacity gaps, the water department and municipal administration of the Town of Mopti and its surrounding district in central Mali have been unable to meet their responsibilities for quite some time now to provide **water supplies and sanitary facilities**. Help is therefore working closely with water suppliers and municipal administrations and offices. Through advice and training, it aims to put local authorities in a position to repair the existing water infrastructure, manage long-term maintenance, establish a waste disposal system for the whole town and introduce water and waste-water management processes.

An important part of this training also includes **building the capacities to apply for state funding** in order to ensure project successes on a long-term basis. Although these funds are available as a result of Mali's decentralisation process, they are often underutilised. In addition, Help is expanding the **water supply systems** in under-supplied town districts in order to improve access to public services and integrate these into existing systems. **Local partner organisations** are crucial to this work. They build trust within the community, independently implement project components and are on hand to advise local structures after the end of a project – true to Help's ethos of sustainability.



Representatives from the village community of Barkongaga in the Mopti Region together with a team from Help Mali

Example 2: Promoting entrepreneurship among young people, Moldova

In Moldova, Help is promoting entrepreneurship and successfully supporting young people with targeted measures (individual assistance, courses, mentoring, specific vocational training opportunities and the provision of materials) to help them **start their own small businesses**. The project builds directly on Help's experience from over two decades of work in the western Balkan countries, where it has continuously further developed methods for founding small and medium-sized enterprises.

The project is implemented by three **local and experienced partner organisations** in close collaboration with Help's regional office. In addition, as part of the project, ten additional local civil society organisations were selected and involved in all phases of the project's implementation. By **building the capacities** of these organisations and promoting networking, proven processes for **supporting the establishment of new businesses** are being shared beyond the project.

This promotion of entrepreneurship through local partners and simultaneous **integration of the plans, methods and criteria of the Moldovan government** for tackling the problems facing young people in the country, guarantees the project's success and its sustainability.

You can find regular updates on our work in Moldova on our website.



**Sub-goal 2:
Sustainability &
environmental protection**

Help is synonymous with needs-based assistance and the sustainable, climate-friendly and environmentally responsible impact of its work.

Our strategy also makes sustainability a central focus of our work. In our global projects, we are guided by the **United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals** and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and we make sure that our projects contribute to achieving these goals whenever possible.

Alongside explicitly embedding sustainability in our project work, it is also immensely important to Help that **great attention is devoted to environmental topics during the implementation of projects**, and that these issues are incorporated accordingly. This includes their integration into areas such as sustainable agriculture, developing resource-efficient water supplies and identifying opportunities to prevent waste.

We seek to set a good example here with our own work. This is why it is vital to us to pursue an **environmentally and climate-friendly approach** wherever possible when implementing our projects, and to take a critical look at our own environmental footprint and minimise it.

Complying with applicable **environmental standards** during the implementation of our project measures, as well as regular **sustainability reporting**, therefore play a key role in our work.

Example: Our first report under the German Sustainability Code was prepared in 2021 (based on pre-pandemic performance indicators from 2019)



To comply with the German Sustainability Code (DNK), Help submitted a declaration to the DNK database concerning conformity with 20 DNK criteria and additional non-financial performance indicators taken from the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the European Federation of Financial Analysts Societies (EFFAS).

You can find our sustainability declaration for the DNK and information on other standards and codes that Help has committed to uphold and implement here:



Sub-goal 3: Organisation & structure

Help has strategies, processes and structures that are fit for the future and clear methods for project implementation.

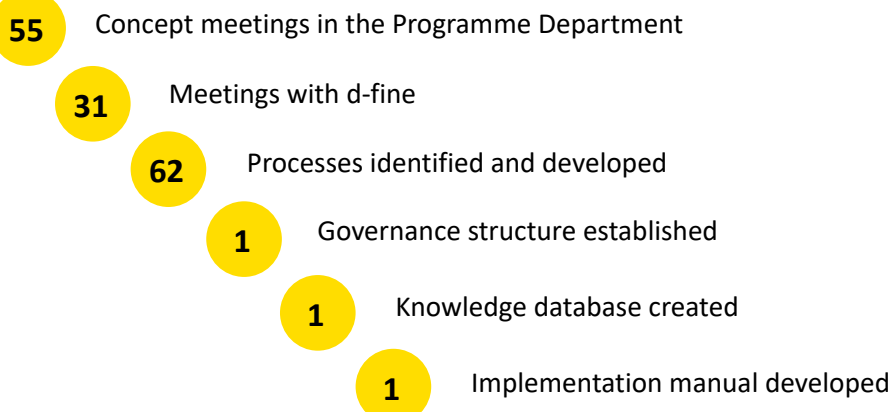
In line with our goal of **implementing needs-based, high-quality and sustainable projects cost-efficiently**, and in order to fulfil our duty of **accountability** towards aid recipients and donors, we continually review our various quality standards and internal processes for our project-based work in terms of their completeness and the benefits they offer. Where necessary, we make sure that suitable adjustments are made.

Measuring the impact of our project work in a meaningful way is therefore just as important as recording and monitoring the **cost-efficiency of our project work** on an ongoing basis.

The **regionalisation of our work** can make an important contribution towards achieving our goal of localisation through the dismantling of our own structures. At the same time, regionalisation provides opportunities to conserve resources and thereby reduce costs. It can also contribute significantly to transnational understanding and integration.

With a view to the regions in which we are active with our local partner organisations, we will therefore continually review the **potential for regionalisation** in our work, with the aim of developing and implementing an organisation-wide model for regionalisation.

Example: Process development in the Programme Department with the aid of pro bono advice from the management consultancy d-fine GmbH



Outcomes: Quality assurance, risk minimisation, higher employee satisfaction, better management of human resources

**Sub-goal 4:
Brand &
communication**

Help has a persuasive brand strategy and communicates consistently, both internally and externally.

A new brand campaign further underscores **Help's unique characteristics** with a special focus on our approach of helping people to help themselves and the mission-based and regional priorities that follow from it.

We will publicise our organisation's work to an even **broader audience** and simultaneously further improve collaboration between our management office and our regional and country offices in the field of public relations work.

Example: Photos from the Help brand campaign (developed with the communication agency Wigwam eG)



Examples of the implementation of the brand campaign for municipal and digital advertising spaces

Implementation

In order to successfully bring the strategy to life and achieve the various sub-goals, a range of work packages have been developed at Help within the framework of a broad participatory process. Their implementation is steered and coordinated by a strategy core group, which is based in the management office in Bonn and led by the Secretary General. The strategy process provides for regular reviews and the adjustment of the goals and work packages where necessary.

Colleagues from all departments within the organisation are involved in the implementation of the work packages. Help's regional and country offices also regularly participate in strategy implementation and contribute directly towards it. In particular, they are involved in the context of localisation and in the areas of empowerment and regionalisation. They also play a key role in making the implementation of projects as sustainable and environmentally and climate-friendly as possible. In addition, we regularly reflect on our strategy together with various local partner organisations.

Initial measures have already been successfully implemented:

December 2020

- Adoption of the strategy plan and the accompanying goals and initial work packages by the Members' Meeting.

2021

- Preparation and publication of our first sustainability report under the German Sustainability Code (DNK).
- Development of a new brand campaign to communicate our brand's essence: helping people to help themselves/empowerment. Launch of the new brand campaign at the end of 2021.

2021/2022

- Revision and implementation of the entire process landscape in the Programme and the Communication & Marketing Departments in order to clarify responsibilities, ensure quality assurance and minimise risks.

2022

- Development and adoption of a new governance structure for the Executive Board and the management team.
- One Help Conference in Germany with the country directors from the Help project countries in order to jointly further develop and further specify our strategic focus.
- Development of a regionalisation concept.

First half of 2023

- Adjustment, definition and further development of the strategic goals and creation of the work packages for 2023/24.
- Adoption of the regionalisation structure and launch of the pilot phase of implementation in West Africa and South East Europe.

Outlook

We believe that a good strategy does not end at a particular point in time; instead, it is constantly evolving. Our strategy is therefore intended to provide orientation for setting the priorities of Help's work in the coming years.

The strategy's goals can change over the course of time, for example by achieving them and replacing them with new goals or in response to profound changes in the underlying conditions for our project work that make adjusting the goals essential.

With this approach, we will ensure that we help people to help themselves with help that **keeps** giving and makes a difference for people in need.



Access to water is a fundamental human right: village communities like this one in Tabako, Mali, are taking the maintenance of their wells into their own hands.



Securing livelihoods and promoting the circular economy: in collaboration with recycling companies, we are helping waste collectors in Serbia find permanent and, above all, safe employment. This way, plastic waste can be recycled into products like plastic bags.

Legal Notice

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Legally responsible within the meaning of German press law

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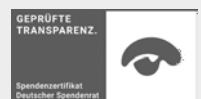
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