

# Strategic Plan **DORCAS**

2019  
–  
2021





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## Our History

Dorcas' history goes back to 1980. Dutch entrepreneur, Dirk Jan Groot, was struck by the persecution and poverty of people he met in Eastern Europe. He put his Christian faith into practice and started an organization to support them and he mobilized many people to take up this cause with him. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Dorcas was founded to coordinate all relief activities. We were named after one of the first Christians, Dorcas, a woman who "was always doing good and helping the poor" (Acts 9:36, NIV). Wide spread famines in Ethiopia prompted us to expand our relief work to Africa. At the beginning of this century we started our first activities in the Middle East. With the emerging conflicts in the region our activities expanded as well. In 2013 all our national and international activities merged into one international organization: Stichting Dorcas Aid International.

## We are Dorcas

*In recent years, Dorcas has undergone an intensive process of evaluating our work to date and rethinking our policies. It was an existential experience in many ways. We collated and reviewed our strongest results and assessed the Failures that we encountered. Lessons were learnt in many different contexts, and elevated to a higher level. In short, we questioned every single one of our existing policies and approaches with respect to their relevance and viability.*

This was followed by a difficult decision-making process. Areas close to our heart had to be let go because they did not pass the test of time. By doing this, we were able to realign our focus and embrace the things we want to take forward. Continuous learning - with the goal of improving the quality of our work - is a key endeavour. As is communicating the core of our organisation: a compassionate and courageous collection of people who channel the love of Jesus Christ in order to protect and empower the most vulnerable.

The results of our review has been laid down in an extensive series of documents. And now we have recaptured this in one condensed proposal.

Proudly, we present to you - our stakeholders - the Strategic Plan 2019-2021. It acts as a testament to our new direction, serving as a compass when we encounter new challenges. Of course, our

learnings and philosophy will continue to develop, as do our daily experiences of life on the ground - in Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. In due course, this will lead to a follow-up plan - in order to respect the fluidity of the humanitarian environment.

Effective planning is a human responsibility - yet we are also aware of another truth. Dependence on the blessing of our Heavenly Father. As the Biblical wisdom states: *In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps (Proverbs 16, 9).*

We are a prayerful organisation.  
We are Dorcas.

Leo Visser  
CEO



# Our Identity

## WHAT WE BELIEVE (convictions)

We believe in God. We believe that each human being is valuable and has been endowed with potential. We have love and hope for everyone who lives in poverty, is excluded, or is caught in a crisis.

## WHAT WE SEE (vision)

In this world, we observe poverty, exclusion and crisis, including the resulting lack of dignity. We do not give in to this. Instead, we desire justice, both for people and their communities, so that they flourish. This is how we follow Jesus Christ.

## WHAT WE DO (mission)

We strive for lasting change for those who live in poverty, are excluded, or are caught in a crisis.

### ► Commitment to the people we support

Where there is poverty, exclusion or crisis, we empower people to flourish - with access to basic services, via restored dignity and resilience, in strong communities, with an eye for the marginalised, without showing favouritism.

### ► Commitment to stakeholders we work with

We proactively seek to partner with others to increase the long-term impact of our mutual efforts. We are a committed partner who delivers quality and shares expertise.

### ► Commitment to those who support our work

We see everyone who contributes to our work - through prayer, time, money or other means - as a most valuable partner. We involve them in our work and its outcomes and impact through transparent reporting and stories of change.

## Summary

We desire justice, both for people and their communities, so that they flourish. We strive for lasting change for those who live in poverty, are excluded, or are caught in a crisis. This is how we follow Jesus Christ.

## WHAT WE ARE GOOD AT (unique strengths)

**Personal attention** We look people in the eye and help them gain confidence.

**Decisive** We stand against injustice and we persevere.

**Trustworthy** We do what we say, work deliberately and are good stewards of resources.

**Local presence** We are present on site and work with local people.

## HOW WE WORK (core values)

**Christ like** We are a Christian organisation and we work prayerfully.

**Courageous** We value an entrepreneurial spirit and are ready to go off the beaten track.

**Collaborative** We desire to partner with everyone who shares our mission.





# Our Context

Charting our course - in a world of infinite variables and complexity - demands a clear understanding of emerging global trends. These trends can pose threats and/or present opportunities:

## 1. Increasing geopolitical imbalances and divides

Nationalistic approaches are becoming more popular, making old and new rifts increasingly visible. Collaborative responses to global challenges (e.g. climate change) - achieved in recent years - appear to be on the defensive - making it ever more difficult to gain worldwide recognition. Growing gaps between population groups has led to increased feelings of insecurity and discontent and the surge of populist movements - with a variety of unpredictable political consequences.

## 2. Urbanisation and migration

Rapid population growth in Africa and Asia has stimulated a major increase of people living in towns and cities. In-country, continental and global migration is on the rise, caused by multiple factors including conflict, insecurity, lack of economic outlook and natural disaster. Jobs will be the key issue.

## 3. Increasing fragility

In many regions, instability is never far away. Major global issues, such as climate change, lead to national disasters as well as local problems. This can often reignite old tensions and civil strife, especially in areas with a young population where unemployment is high. Developmental gains can be wiped out. Humanitarian space is shrinking and sensitivity towards NGO's - including severe legal restrictions placed on their operations - is rising.

## 4. Increasingly sensitive relationships of (i)NGOs with the general public

In recent years, the traditionally strong relationship between (i)NGOs and the general public in the global North has become more sensitive. Strong

bonds with constituencies are vital. Ageing constituencies call for new ways of connecting with a younger public. Western secularisation is a particular threat to Christian organisations. However, openness towards - and the role of - (local) faith-based organisations is growing.

## 5. Disruptive technology forcing innovation

Technology is a game changer for NGOs. Digitalisation and global connectedness continue to grow exponentially, creating - partly still unknown - innovations with new opportunities and threats. This has also disrupted the work of NGOs and transformed their positioning on the global stage - with the need for more open and curious attitudes.

## 6. Sustainable Development Goals set the development agenda and call for wide cooperation

The UN's (2015) adoption of 17 Goals - to be reached by 2030 - has set the development agenda for the next decade. NGOs need to focus on increased sustainability, scalability and added value in order to achieve lasting impact. Sectoral and cross-sectoral collaboration with other actors, such as corporate companies and institutions, is a key driver of poverty alleviation.

## 7. The humanitarian sector: shifting agendas and power structures

The Grand Bargain agreement (Istanbul, 2016) defines the localisation of operational decision-making powers and local accountability as key issues. Following this agenda, funding channels have moved South. Many NGOs struggle with their roles and with striking the right balance between niche focus and organisational scale in order to stay relevant and boost efficiency.



# Our Way Forward

Dorcas has worked in humanitarian aid and development for almost four decades. We've seen what works best, and honed our approach - but perhaps more than ever, the landscape is changing. We value our heritage but are eager to continually improve our performance. Learning is often a journey, rather than pushing a button. It takes time and requires determination. Our strategy for 2019-2021 incorporates the following commitments:

## **1. What we want to achieve - greater impact and evaluation**

We have always been a hands-on organisation - quick to act, wherever we are needed. We have learnt to better monitor and evaluate our programmes to ensure that they are accessible to all - working towards sustainable results. Based on our Theory of Change and way-of-working we consider ownership and the participation of beneficiaries - before, during and after an intervention - as key. Since we work in many fragile areas, the importance of the humanitarian aid-development nexus cannot be overlooked.

## **2. How we work - with a focus on added value**

In order to uphold quality, we focus on adding specific - and relevant - value in selected

intervention areas (see Dorcas Lens on page 10). As a tool for harnessing and focusing our efforts, the lens recognises that we can only do so much - that we can't be an expert in every need we encounter. For this reason, we have narrowed our programmatic focus - delivering high-quality programme concepts in the established intervention areas.

## **3. How we relate with our stakeholders - relational collaboration**

Close collaboration based on good relationships with relevant actors (NGOs and other players) are key to the implementation of successful programmes. This is equally valid with respect to our partners. We actively pursue collaboration with key players in the public and private domain. Our new corporate positioning accentuates this.

## **4. How we use goods - for programme funding through cash generation**

In the past, material support, especially in Eastern Europe, was a key element of our programmes. The conclusion of these activities left a network for the collection and assorting of goods at our disposal. We decided to keep this network alive - as far as feasible - and to transform material support into cash generation. Today, this contributes significantly to our programme funding. The donation of material goods and the involvement of volunteers constitutes the base of our social enterprises - particularly the Dorcas Shops.

## **5. How we organise ourselves - de-centralised entrepreneurship**

We have begun to change our

organisational model by shifting power and responsibility to the Dorcas Country Offices. They now make their own operational decisions with increased staff capacity and an enhanced working relationship with the International Office. The International Office provides relevant strategic support and expertise. Policy decisions are taken by the International Council, whereby the Management Team and Country Directors work together to make the best call.

## **6. How we stay on track - building a strong backbone**

Support functions such as IT, Financial Systems and Quality Management Systems have become the backbone of our organisation. We regularly strengthen our backbone in order to increase flexibility, act

quickly with precision across all our operations, improve knowledge support and the mobilisation of resources. This will prepare us for the accelerated digitalisation of the humanitarian aid sector.

## **7. How we plan - a global human resources approach**

The moves we make have important organisational consequences with respect to internal roles and competences. Human Resources - including strong leadership and well equipped staff - is essential to the implementation of robust strategy. Moving forward, we will focus on the translation of responsibilities to - and capacity-building of - Country Staff.

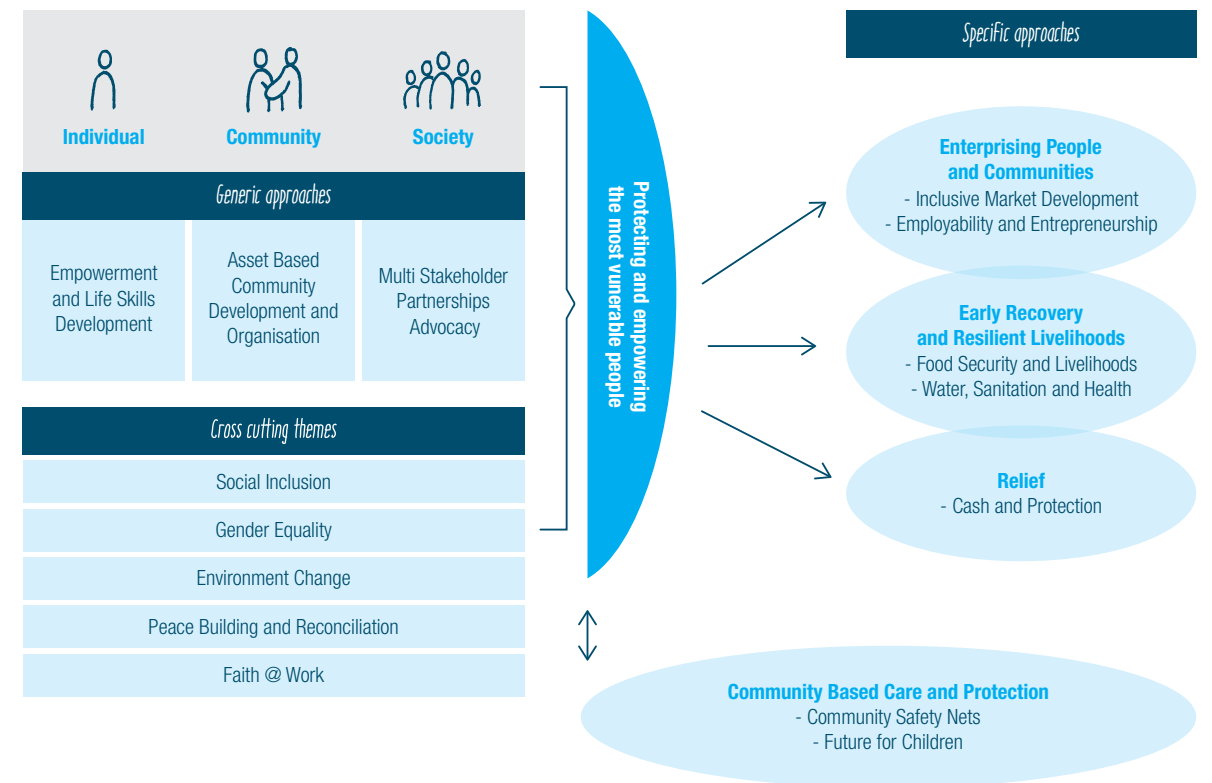
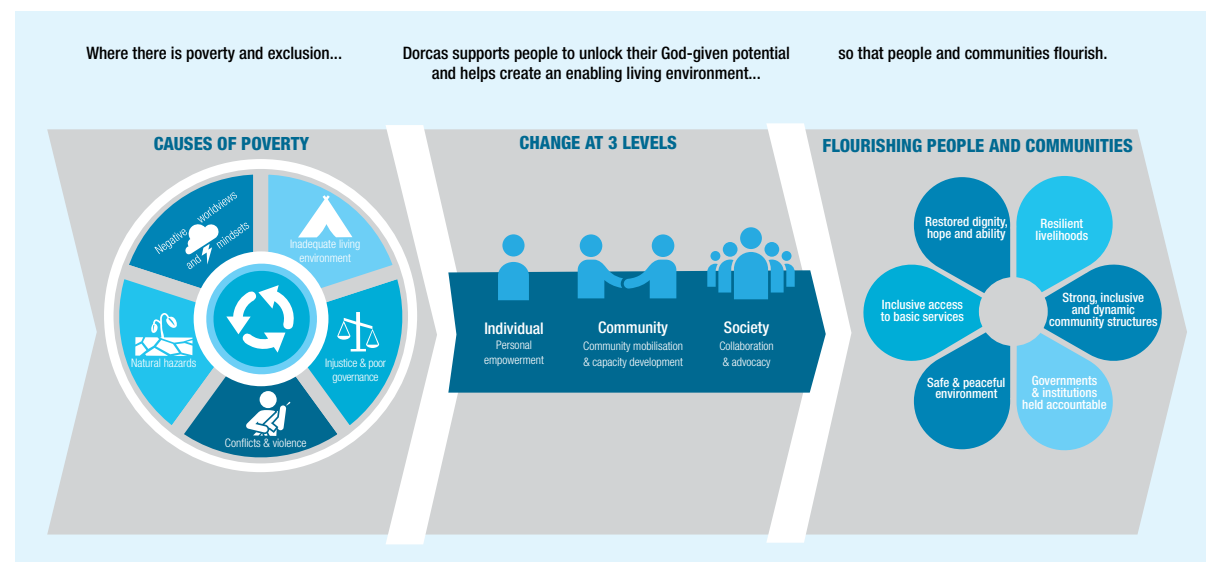


# Our Way of Working

## Our work

Dorcas views poverty as a condition in which people fail to fulfil their intellectual, material, physical, social and spiritual needs and capacities. This kind of poverty is often related to mechanisms of (self) exclusion and barriers within society. In contrast, we want to contribute to the protection, inclusion and

resilience of vulnerable people, living in poverty, or caught in a crisis. Our Theory of Change recognises that transformation is needed at the individual, community and societal level. We strive to see a six-fold impact, resulting in flourishing people and communities.



In order to deliver tangible change for the most vulnerable people in our regions of work, Dorcas uses generic programme approaches at all three levels. These are characterised by five cross-cutting themes. We have developed expertise in four Intervention Areas with one or two specific approaches, contextualised to the different regions in which we work. We always keep our mission front-and-centre by using our Lens - protecting and empowering the most vulnerable people - to decide if and what action should be taken.

## Working together

In order to fulfil our mission, a variety of resources are needed. Traditionally, this led us to focus on fundraising. Yet such terminology suggests that we need funding alone. In reality, we need partners and people. In the Netherlands and abroad, we work together with partner organisations, communities, volunteers, donors, shoppers and more - a movement that one day hopes to encompass one million supporters. These people share our vision and facilitate our work via time, advocacy, money and prayers. They also need us. We help them fulfil their personal endeavours, assist their desire for justice and help churches fulfil their diaconal duties. This win-

win approach has given birth to a powerful Dorcas Movement - towards lasting change for those who live in poverty, are excluded, or are caught in a crisis.

Communities play a vital role in our way of working. In our Theory of Change we aim for strong communities. In the Netherlands, thriving communities are the foundation of the Dorcas constituency. Alongside tens of thousands of individuals, hundreds of Dorcas Communities can be identified. The next step is to connect communities in the South with communities in the North. A Dutch Dorcas Community is a self-propelled and self-organised group of people connected via the mission of - and shared interest in - Dorcas. Together, they explore opportunities for action in a manner that also rewards them. Beyond their donation efforts, a group of Dorcas Shop volunteers instigate unity and mutual care. Entrepreneurs gather in business clubs to collaborate and develop Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) opportunities. Working groups have been the lifeblood of our constituency for decades. That we are preparing the 25th edition of the Dorcas Food Campaign in 2020 is testament to the work of more than 700 communities across the Netherlands.

# Our Strategic Ambitions

## Ambition 1:

Across all Dorcas' programmes we want to achieve impact that enables the most vulnerable people - and their communities - to flourish

We work both in **humanitarian aid and development**, as well as in transitions between the two. We have developed fundamental theories of change for our four intervention areas, and identified long-term outcomes. Our way-of-working allows us to contribute to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The below table explains how.



All Dorcas' activities in humanitarian aid and in development work contribute to the immediate and longer term alleviation of (extreme) vulnerability and poverty, to improvement of food and water security, and to the (re)building of resilient livelihoods. Access to protection and inclusion of marginalized/crises-affected groups is key in what we do. Our **Relief** approach is underpinned by humanitarian principles in order to save lives and alleviate suffering.



Through our **Community Based Care and Protection** approach, we develop and strengthen safety nets and social protection for improved health and wellbeing of vulnerable elderly people and families. We offer disadvantaged children access to inclusive education and relevant skills training. In this approach, we promote gender equality and inclusive, accountable government institutions, and we fight abuse, exploitation and trafficking.



In our **Early Recovery and Resilient Livelihoods** approach, we give special attention to improved food security and nutrition, in ways that production systems become more sustainable and adapted to climate change. WASH interventions are community-based and promote entrepreneurial solutions.



Our approach **Enterprising People and Communities** supports entrepreneurship and employability for all women and men, with a focus on inclusion of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. We promote access to productive resources inclusive market systems. Where relevant we build and participate in multi-stakeholder and public-private partnerships.

## Ambition 2:

Dorcas is known for - and positioned as - a key player and partner in community-based inclusive development and humanitarian aid

We are working to improve and coordinate our corporate positioning. This will see the roll out of a new Brand and Communications Strategy - based on our vision and policy choices. The intention is to enhance our image at the national and international level and by doing so, foster new and meaningful relationships. In the 2019-2021 time frame, we will share our Communications Strategy with a variety of important actors: governments, international organisations, local organisations, the private sector and our constituency - with the aim of achieving greater transparency and collaboration. In addition, this will help us connect with partners, influence others and leverage our competitive value - ultimately bolstering our reputation. Crucially, we will establish a systematic feedback process holding our activities, in all areas of the organisation, to account - in line with the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) on Quality.

## Ambition 3:

Dorcas accelerates the mobilisation of communities, resources and funds towards transformative change

Amongst our Dutch constituency and abroad, we facilitate and connect individuals, churches, corporates, knowledge institutions and private foundations. Our partnerships can involve different perspectives on action towards transformative change. Some will participate by donating their time, goods, prayers or advocacy efforts - both independently and via the Dorcas Communities. Others will provide funds, knowledge and expertise. We also form partnerships with a variety of institutions, the Dutch and international governments and government agencies, the European Union, multilateral organisations and humanitarian aid and development networks.

We always strive to engage others in our mission and seek long-term partnerships - North and South - in order to diversify sources of income and resources and develop a dynamic network of partners. In fact, these relationships are the foundation of our Local Resource Mobilisation (LRM) strategies, contextualised to the different regions in which we work.



# ‘I have confidence’

*Agnes Filipo From Tanzania*

‘My role in the family used to be purely to look after the children. My husband has a job, but his income isn’t high. If I mentioned that we needed something, he refused to buy it for me. He looked down on me. As a participant in a Dorcas savings group, I was able to invest in my own shop. Now, I sell engine parts. I can spend the money I earn as I think is best. I am no longer dependent on my husband. That gives me a lot of confidence.’

Read more about the savings groups via  
[www.dorcas.org/vicoba](http://www.dorcas.org/vicoba)



# Our Regions of Operation

In all regions of operation, Dorcas works with and through local partners. Our policy is to involve local actors as much as possible. Building local capacity on an organisational and programmatic level is an element of all our interventions.

## Eastern-Europe

Dorcas is active in Ukraine, Moldova, Romania and Albania. In these countries, we focus on people who are left behind. We use two core approaches:

- ▶ **Community Based Care and Protection** for very vulnerable elderly and families. We focus on community safety nets, family development and a future for vulnerable children and youth.
- ▶ Interventions in the area of **Enterprising People and Communities** focus on improving economic perspectives through employability and entrepreneurship.

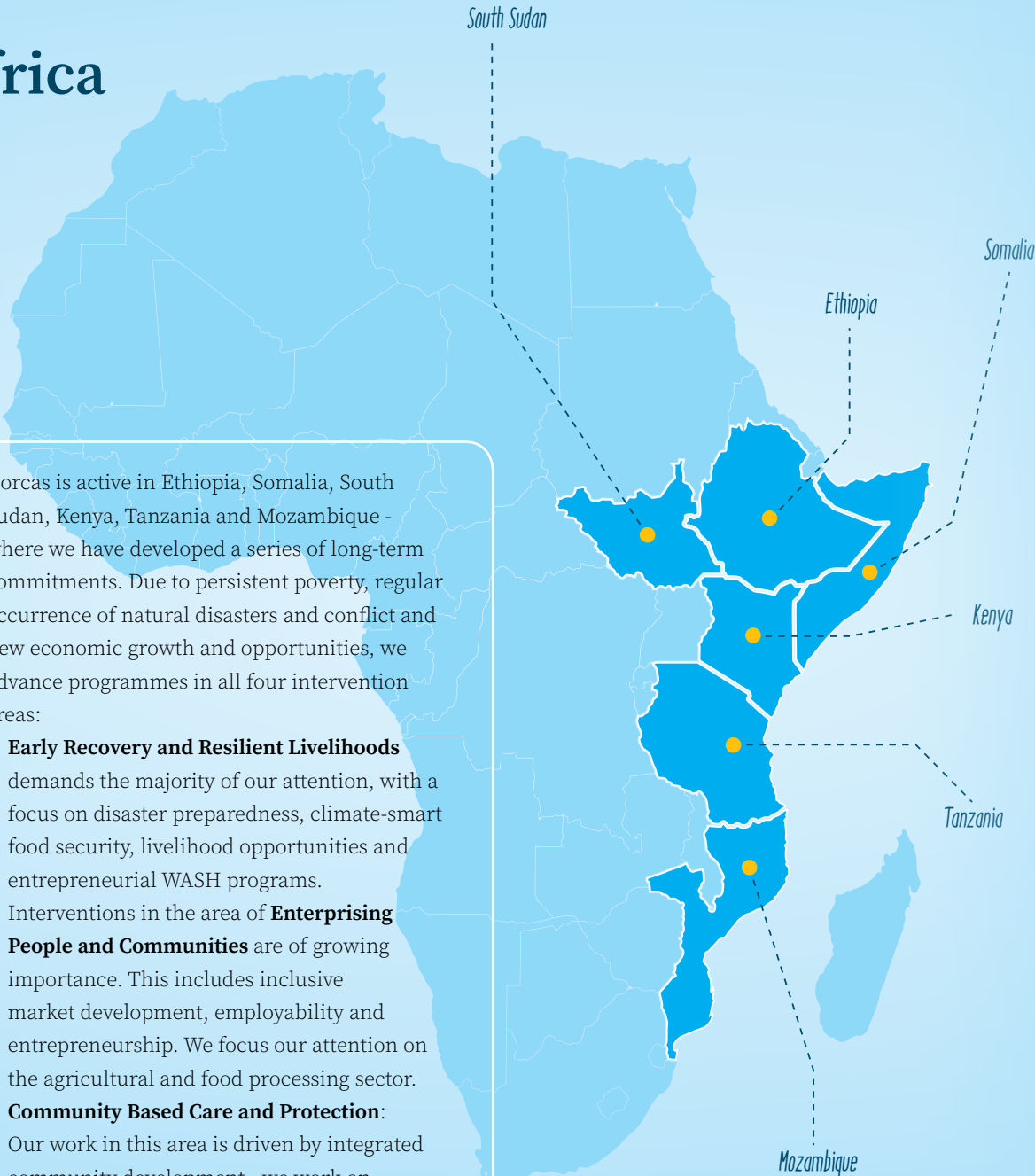
These two components are characterised by the empowerment of communities via capacity-building activities for local organisations and the development of alliances with local partners. We stimulate cooperation between different actors and equip them to lobby governments and advocate that fundamental rights of vulnerable groups are upheld.



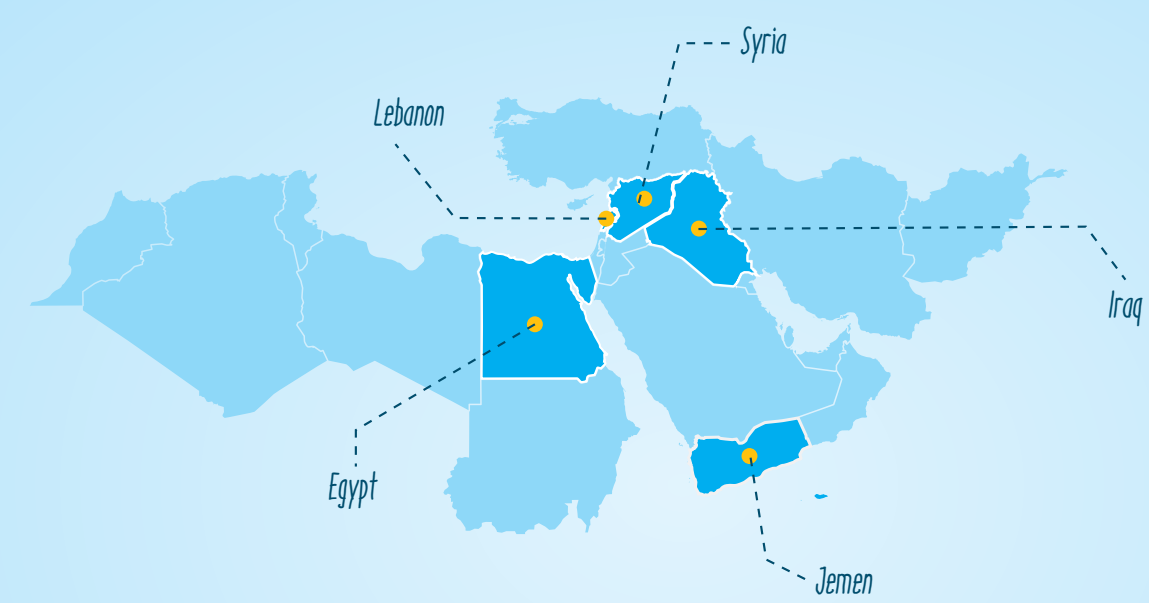
## Africa

Dorcas is active in Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique - where we have developed a series of long-term commitments. Due to persistent poverty, regular occurrence of natural disasters and conflict and new economic growth and opportunities, we advance programmes in all four intervention areas:

- ▶ **Early Recovery and Resilient Livelihoods** demands the majority of our attention, with a focus on disaster preparedness, climate-smart food security, livelihood opportunities and entrepreneurial WASH programs.
- ▶ Interventions in the area of **Enterprising People and Communities** are of growing importance. This includes inclusive market development, employability and entrepreneurship. We focus our attention on the agricultural and food processing sector.
- ▶ **Community Based Care and Protection:** Our work in this area is driven by integrated community development - we work on building a future for children and youth and develop robust community safety nets for elderly people.
- ▶ Humanitarian aid programmes can be implemented when urgent **Relief** needs arise in all countries mentioned. We build up rapid response capacity in disaster prone countries.



# Middle East

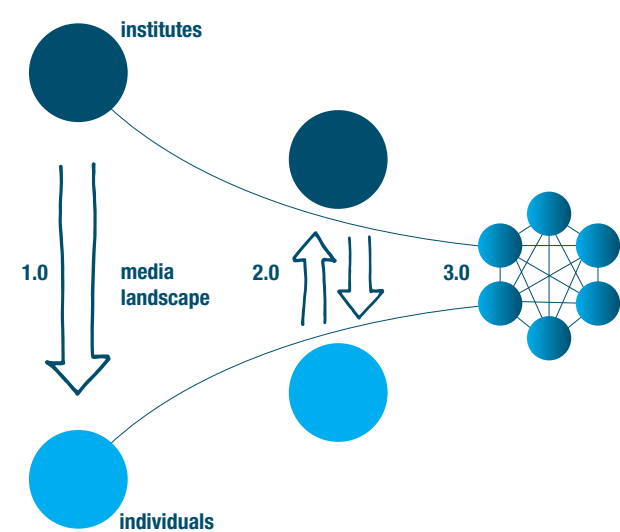


Dorcas is active in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and Egypt. Due to the complexity of armed conflict and large-scale displacement in the region, our interventions differ per area and situation. This has led to the implementation of integrated humanitarian aid and development strategies - what we call, nexus strategies. Women empowerment and gender equality is a major theme throughout.

- ▶ In fragile areas and unpredictable settings our focus is on **Relief and Early Recovery and Resilient Livelihoods**: cash-based assistance, protection and access to basic services. Other important elements are psychosocial support and social cohesion.
- ▶ In more stable situations, our programmes are evolving towards the area of **Enterprising People and Communities**. This includes skill training and (self-)employability to improve income. In some contexts, we focus on agricultural entrepreneurship and sustainable WASH.
- ▶ In collaboration with local communities **Community Based Care and Protection** interventions are implemented, building networks for vulnerable children, youth and elderly.

# Our Partners and Communities

By recognising people and communities as our ambassadors - in addition to our Fundraising and Communications activities - Dorcas is in a state of transition. We break this transition down into phases - moving from 1.0 and 2.0 (we are currently in between) to 3.0 (where we plan to end up, without ignoring the benefits of 1.0 and 2.0). The figure and table presented below illustrate this:



Stage	1.0	2.0	3.0
Central	Products	Customers	Values
Type	Transaction	Relationship	Partnership
Value	Price	Investment	Business case
Communication	Inform	Connect	Engage
Accent	What	How	Why

In order to work towards a one million strong Dorcas Movement we have established three guidance principles on which our work in 2019-2021 will be based upon:

- ▶ **Clear Corporate Positioning** - The international Dorcas Movement will be led by a new brand identity. Attached to our mission statement - this identity will focus on transparent accounts, credible track records and a clear break down of where - and how - Dorcas adds value. For years, we have been known as a Dutch NGO, working in several countries. The reality - we are an international humanitarian aid and development organisation active in 15 countries, with an influential base in the Netherlands.
- ▶ **Powerful Community Engagement** - The Dorcas Movement will increase our efforts to engage communities and individuals who feel that they are known - and seen - by us. We will invest in innovative marketing strategies comprised of reliable data-analysis and systematic research and testing. This will allow us to generate new leads and foster meaningful relationships.
- ▶ **Co-creation with our Constituency and Partners** - The Dorcas Movement demonstrates that we must always work together in our mission to deliver lasting change for those who live in poverty, are excluded, or are caught in a crisis. From 2019 onwards, we will work exclusively in the creation of campaigns *with* individuals and communities in our base networks instead of campaigns *by-and-large for* them.



# Our Organisation

## Future-proof organisation

In order to achieve our ambitions, we must work towards the continuous development of a future-proof organisation. We also need a decentralised organisational structure. Responsibilities will be entrusted - as far as possible - to the Country Offices. Collaboration, ownership and entrepreneurship are important aspects of a vibrant international organisation. Finding our way in a rapidly evolving environment means making tough choices. To make the right organizational decisions we must ask the right questions: How does an organizational project or activity add value to our mission? Does it strengthen our positioning within the sector? Are our stakeholders on board and involved? Does it contribute to our way of working or improve our organisation?

- Key action points for the period 2019-2021 include focus on the development of:
- ▶ A **quality management system** to strengthen our organisational foundation
  - ▶ Strong and devoted **leadership** for guidance and cohesion
  - ▶ A **learning organisation** for continuous improvement and innovation

## Quality management system

The backbone of any expert organisation is a quality management system. It is not a bureaucratic add-on - rather a system which provides clarity, supports effective and efficient processes and establishes a foundation for further improvement. During 2019-2021 we will invest considerably in this system. A crucial element will be staff development, since they are the core of our organisation.

Our international change process - named: Best Way of Working Together - will also see us implement our decentralisation strategy. Key focus points within this plan are organisational structure, roles and responsibilities and capacity-building. Upgrading our processes regarding Planning and Monitoring and Evaluation is a priority, as is the strengthening of International Human Resources. An overhaul of our IT systems is also a vital step in the process - allowing us to compete with the best in innovation.

## Leadership

Dorcas has long been characterised as a pioneer organisation. While preserving the best elements of it, we now need to focus on strengthening our expertise. This calls for modern leadership accompanied by clear goals and guidelines. Leadership that delegates responsibilities thus increasing ownership and encouraging entrepreneurial thinking. It is imperative that all areas of the organisation are led through this transition phase in a consistent and coherent manner - this, alongside confidence building, is the main task of management. It is also the responsibility of the Management Team to ensure that staff feel connected to the new mission, vision and strategy. And that

talent is rewarded so that individuals can develop. Tailored feedback sessions are key to this. During the decentralisation process, the leadership structure across the organisation will be further refined - as an area of priority.

## Learning organisation

In order to really grow as an organisation - particularly in the humanitarian aid and development sector - we believe in facilitating the learning of our staff as well as the continuous transformation of our operations. In order to do this, we must strengthen and accelerate our learning processes and stimulate a collaborative learning culture with our partners. A steep learning curve is always positive. Open mind-sets and creative thinking must go hand in hand with systematic documentation and internalizing our learning. A flexible organisation with a solid foundation is essential. Only then can we safeguard quality, solve problems systematically and develop innovative solutions. We are currently upgrading our internal audits for programmatic and organisational quality. We will introduce a coherent learning agenda based on our Theory of Change, which includes research, pilots and track record building projects.



# Our Financial Ambitions

	(In million Euros)		
	2019	2020	2021
<b>To be spent on objectives</b>			
Relief	5.0	5.0	5.4
Early Recovery and Resilient Livelihoods	2.9	4.0	5.1
Enterprising People and Communities	5.8	5.9	5.9
Community Based Care and Protection	4.3	4.7	5.2
Awareness	0.9	0.9	1.0
	<b>18.9</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>22.6</b>
<b>Income ambitions</b>			
Private, Business and Church donations	8.6	8.7	9.3
Net-result through Volunteer Enterprising	3.9	4.3	4.8
Government subsidies	6.9	7.7	8.5
Other Non-Profit Organisations	1.8	2.1	2.5
In kind donations	0.9	0.9	0.9
	<b>22.1</b>	<b>23.7</b>	<b>26.0</b>
<b>Costs</b>			
Fundraising Expenses	1.6	1.7	1.9
Management and Administration Expenses	1.1	1.2	1.3
	<b>2.7</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>3.2</b>
<b>Balance</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.2</b>

### A solid financial position

For 2019-2021, we aim to grow our resources. This growth is expected in our Dorcas Shops and sales as well as amongst our work with foundations and institutional partners. In the years 2019-2021 we will intensify our public engagement efforts and after this let income in this area increase of its own accord.

In-kind income, largely a product of the Dorcas Food Campaign, is predicted to stabilise at the level of 2019. We will also peg our relative fundraising and administration costs at the 2019 level. Our solid financial position is a healthy foundation for our future development.



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