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ACN raised record amount for persecuted and suffering Christians in 2021

In the financial year 2021, the international Catholic pastoral charity and pontifical foundation *Aid to the Church in Need* (ACN International) received 209.7 million AUD in donations to support persecuted and suffering Christians around the world.

ACN International's annual figures were approved by the Supervisory Board on 15 June in Rome showing the support of persecuted or poor Christian communities by the Pontifical Charity around the world. "In 2021, the generosity of our benefactors in more than 23 countries, made it possible for ACN to support programs totalling 166.8 million AUD. We can only thank them on behalf of our suffering brothers and sisters for this exceptional support during the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we are confident that God will richly reward them for their help", said Executive President Thomas Heine-Geldern.

Of the 166.8 million, 146.2 million (87.6%) funded 5298 projects in 132 countries around the world in which the Church suffers from persecution or extreme poverty. A further 20.6 million (12.4%) were used to fulfill ACN's information, advocacy, and prayer mission, for example during the annual "Red Week for Persecuted Christians" or the production and distribution of the "Religious Freedom Report". Additionally, a surplus of 7.3 million was earmarked for project work in the year 2022.

From the total of 35.6 million AUD expended, 13.5 million (6.7%) were dedicated to administration and 22.1 million (10.9%) to donor relations and fundraising.

As usual, in 2021 donations to ACN came exclusively from private individuals, as the charity does not accept public subsidies.

Africa, Asia, and the Middle East are in the lead

The devastating effects of the pandemic in many developing countries demanded a robust response from ACN, with Covid-related projects accounting for 15.2 million AUD of the 2021 budget. India, which was particularly badly hit by the virus, tops the list in terms of the total amount of funding projects, with over 17 million. The Asian state is followed by Ukraine, Lebanon, Syria, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In terms of regions, Africa stands out, having received 30.7% of the project aid, with Asia and Oceania placing second (22.3%). In the Middle East (16.9%) ACN continued its commitment, especially in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq where the charity invested in projects aimed at helping the Christians stay in their ancestral lands despite persecution, war, and economic crises.

In line with ACN's pastoral mission, the funding includes the formation of priests and religious, means of transportation, for example, 4x4 cars or boats for remote parishes, and the construction and renovation of churches. In 2021, ACN supported the acquisition of 1338 vehicles and contributed to the building of 307 churches, 157 monasteries and novitiates, 295 pastoral centres, and 52 seminaries.

One in eight priests supported by ACN

Another significant means of support is the distribution of financial aid to priests serving in poor communities. A total of 52,879 priests, in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East, received support in the form of Mass stipends. These numbers mean that approximately one in every eight priests in the world benefitted from this aid, but also that every 15 seconds a Mass is celebrated somewhere in the world for the intentions of ACN benefactors who make this work possible.

Formation is a cornerstone of the charity's support. In 2021 ACN funded the training of 13,381 seminarians, which is around one in every eight in the world. Since 2004 it has supported 237,353 seminarians.

One in every three dioceses

In 2021 ACN ran projects in a total of 1181 dioceses. Considering that the Church recognizes 3026 ecclesiastical territories, this means that the pontifical charity directly aided one in every three Catholic dioceses in the world.

"From Albania to Zimbabwe, ACN continues to make a real and lasting difference in the lives of Christians all over the world. These communities are a source of inspiration for us, in the way they live their faith, despite the poverty, difficulties, and often the outright persecution they suffer. Thanks to the enormous generosity and help of our benefactors, we can support and sustain them materially", says Thomas Heine-Geldern, executive president of ACN.

"In our work last year, we were profoundly conscious of the workings of divine providence which, in the midst of growing global uncertainty, opened the hearts of our benefactors ever wider."

"In 2021, as in previous years, Ukraine was one of the countries that benefitted most from ACN funding. The fact that we had so many projects and partners on the ground left us in a good position to respond immediately with aid in 2022 when the war started. ACN will continue to work, wherever it can, to help Christians who need assistance, so long as our benefactors continue to trust us with their donations and support", he added.

Aid to the Church in Need is an international Pontifical charity. Founded in the wake of World War II to help Christian refugees from Eastern Europe, it has now offices in 23 countries and serves persecuted and other suffering Christians all over the world.

For more information and details regarding ACN International's annual financial report visit www.aidtochurch.org/reports

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