

STRATEGY

**THE INTERNATIONAL WORK OF THE HELSINKI
DEACONESS INSTITUTE (HDI)**

2018-2021

Content:

1. Strategic plans yrs. 2018-2021	3
2. Strategic priorities	3
3. Strategic priorities in the work of the Helsinki Deaconess Institute	5
1. Young people as future makers	5
2. Well-being and agency of returning migrants	6
3. Rights and equal participation of minorities	8
4. Cross-cutting themes	9
4. Principles of our international work	9

1. Strategic plans yrs. 2018-2021

The Helsinki Deaconess Institute (HDI) is a foundation operating mainly in Finland and running a few projects based activities internationally. According to its vision, HDI is a pioneer in bold diaconal work. HDI targets the most vulnerable people at risk of being excluded from the activities and services of the mainstream society. The work of HDI is value-driven, based on the ethical principles of diaconia. HDI's partners include various non-governmental, governmental, private and faith-based organisations.

HDI's international work follows the organisation's vision and strategy, which aims to enable everyone to participate and utilize their own potential in the society or community. International activities have been a part of HDI's work throughout its 150-year history. HDI's international development projects are currently implemented in southern Africa and the wider Europe.¹ Most funding is granted by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) and is project-based.

HDI aims at refocusing and expanding its international activities in 2018-2021 so that 20 per cent of the foundation's projects are implemented internationally by 2020. The international projects are aimed at being implemented in the countries of the wider European area, and new types of operations will be established in the countries that are in the post disaster/ reconstruction phase and are receiving returning migrants. The new strategy enables a broadened funding basis and requires effective coordination and focus on new strategic priorities.

2. Strategic priorities

From 2018 to 2021 the target groups of the international work will be young people, refugees, returning migrants and marginalised minorities. HDI has selected three strategic priorities and the integrated cross-cutting themes for 2018-2021 as follows:

1. Young people as future makers,
2. Well-being and agency of returning migrants,
3. Rights and equal participation of minorities,
4. Cross-cutting themes (digital opportunities for all, enabling entrepreneurship)

¹ Wider Europe is currently made up of the EU itself, EU candidate countries, potential candidate countries, countries in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as Russia and other former Soviet Union countries in the immediate European Neighborhood

The selected strategic priorities are not mutually exclusive, and different projects may contain more than one of them. HDI is striving to further develop its expertise in them.

HDI will focus its work geographically in the wider Europe and in countries where there is a return of refugees and migrants. This process will be ensured by the steps itemised in the table below:

Action	Year
Exit strategy implemented: Namibia	2018-2019
Expansion of projects in wider Europe: work for the rights and equal participation of minorities, in particular of Roma, will be expanded to Ukraine, Belarus, Serbia. Work continues in Kosovo and Moldova. Work with prisoners will be established in Armenia.	2019-2020
Start of a development project in Somalia: the work for skills development for employability and self-employment will be established in the communities of returning migrants and vulnerable young people.	2019-
Start of a development project in the Middle East: Work with returning migrants will be established	2020-

To achieve the strategic objectives, HDI will effectively expand its funding basis with the following actions in 2018-2021:

Action	Year
Applying for European level funds in partnership with other European NGOs, government and private sector	2018-
Applying for new forms of funding in partnerships with private sector	2018-
Identifying international funds provided by INGOs and private sector	2019-
Applying for a partnership agreement with the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). This partnership will ensure the availability of MFA based humanitarian funding. (Preparing the organisational structures for this application in 2019-2020)	2021
Applying for a partnership with the MFA in 2021, which would result in programme-based, multiannual funding	2021

3. Strategic priorities in the work of the Helsinki Deaconess Institute

1. Young people as future makers

High levels of unemployment among young people are a global phenomenon. According to the latest statistics,² 21.3 percent of the world's young people are without work and many work in the informal labour markets and 16.7 percent live in poverty (less than \$ 1.9 a day). The African continent is especially hit by this, and it is estimated that 15-24-year-old youth will comprise 77 per cent of the African population in 2030. Lack of future perspectives in African and Asian countries has already caused a massive global migration of young people under the age of 30 to richer countries.³

Rapid global digitalisation also brings challenges and opportunities. Digitalisation requires new types of vocational skills and competences, international and intercultural skills, and the knowhow to create their own careers and work. Youth without education or with low quality education backgrounds are excluded from this development. Non-governmental organisations have an essential role to play in filling the gap by providing alternative career support and vocational training to young people.

HDI has successfully worked with vulnerable youth groups and developed specialised working methods in Finland, in wider Europe and in southern African countries. In Finland HDI offered youth services in 7 towns and reached over 1000 youth in 2017. Studies show that the youth's wellbeing and accessibility to vocational education and employment have improved through these interventions. HDI has used multiple approaches, such as life coaching, career guidance and counselling, psychoeducation and mentoring activities, flexible group interventions, multi-agency approach, youth clubs and parliaments.

Why HDI in global youth work?

In all its activities, HDI aims at enabling active, positive and safe daily life and future for young people. Employability and employment of young people lies at the centre of the work. HDI will utilize its 10+ years` experience in youth work across Finland but will carefully study and consider the local cultures, existing

² ENEE and ILO

³ Global Employment Trends for Youth 2018. International Labor Organization (ILO)
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_598669.pdf

circumstances and service structures in new contexts. HDI will ensure that the capacities of young people to make their own career paths is strengthened.

Many countries in the developing world lack professional youth workers. HDI will therefore participate in strengthening professionalism in youth work and in identifying the capacities of communities to provide mentorship, psycho-education and other types of voluntary support to the vulnerable youth.

HDI believes that the basic education which contains life skills components builds a basis for the future employability of young people. Therefore, youth who are excluded from mainstream basic education require alternative study paths and individualised career support. These are especially required in disaster settings and poor communities. HDI aims at participating in this, by offering tailor made basic education programmes in cooperation with its partner organisations as well as offering individualised psychosocial and career support programmes for the youth in need. Civil engagement can also be used as a tool in building the types of skills and knowledge needed in working life.

2. Well-being and agency of returning migrants

Finland along with other European countries experienced a massive immigration of refugees from developing and war zone countries during the last years, and according to global estimates, this phenomenon will increase. Most of refugees have fled economic and political threats and deficiencies. However, a massive number of refugees have also fled to neighbouring developing countries and the Middle East and their return to the home countries seems unlikely. A few refugee groups are returning to their country of origin, i.e. Somalia, as living conditions there are improving slowly.

Refugees experience insecurity, threats, violence, detention, thirst and hunger during migration, and these negatively affect their mental health. Every second refugee suffers from mild, medium or severe depression and every third from stress associated with traumatic experiences. The wellbeing of refugees is also influenced by the attitude of the host community and how it views the newcomers. This is shown in how eagerly the refugees are welcomed to participate in the community activities and how actively the world of work and other income generation opportunities is made accessible to newcomers.

Non-governmental organisations can potentially influence the wellbeing and active participation of migrants by acting in community based and professional roles. Organisations specialised in trauma related psychotherapy have successfully strengthened the daily survival of refugees by alleviating trauma-related stress and depression of refugees through therapeutic interventions. A few organisations

have actively worked on strengthening the participation of refugees and repatriating migrants in the host communities.

HDI has developed and offered psychosocial support to refugees and migrants through variety of projects and offered specialised psychiatric services for traumatised and tortured refugees and their family members more than 25 years. A variety of methods such as rehabilitation for people who have been tortured, trauma therapy for family members and children, and psychosocial and community-based support have been developed during these years. HDI also offers reception, day centre and health care services for asylum seekers and migrants without required documents for residency.

HDI's aims in work with returning migrants

HDI will utilize its long-term and wide-ranging experience in work with refugees and migrants and aims at bringing sustainable solutions in countries where large refugee settlements exist on a long-term basis, and countries and communities to which migrants are returning. The work will be implemented in cooperation with local partners and diaspora communities.

Many countries have limited resources to provide professional mental health and psychological services. Therefore, available resources existing in communities will be identified and their capacities to respond to the psychosocial and mental health needs will be strengthened.

Conflicts between and within communities are encountered in neighbourhoods where former conflict-sides must continue living their daily life together. Traumatic war experiences prevent peace and trust building. To overcome the experienced cruelty within the communities it is necessary to deal with communal and individual traumas. The HDI will participate in the process by developing community-based trauma healing practices that suit the different contexts. HDI's long term experience with trauma and rehabilitation work with war victims and actors will be utilized in this process.

HDI will also bring its expertise to strengthen the professionalism in work with traumatised people in various organisations, regions or states as well as to develop specialised psychiatric services for torture victims.

3. Rights and equal participation of minorities

In most countries there are ethnic minorities based on ethnic, religious or linguistic backgrounds. Although the human rights situation varies in different countries, ethnic minorities commonly experience various forms of discrimination, poverty and social exclusion all over the world. Moreover, ethnic tensions are a cause in most of world conflicts, in which minorities and ethnic groups are often subjected to brutality and violence.

The situation of the Roma minority has been a particular concern in the EU and in the western Balkans. As a minority, Roma face discrimination and their lives are characterised by continued poverty and exclusion from education, employment, access to public services and political decision-making. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights has recently reported on the issues of hate, conflicts and antigypsism attitudes and actions in Europe.

HDI has long experience of working with non-dominant ethnic, religious and linguistic communities and has developed its competence in this work through activities in Finland, Eastern Europe and Balkan region. HDI has developed methods in low-threshold services, individualised paths to education and the world of work, rehabilitative work with prisoners, outreach work and community-based work among minorities. HDI supports the inclusion and human rights of the people from the minority groups and utilises a multi-stakeholder approach and local ownership.

HDI's global work with minorities

HDI aims at strengthening the human rights situations, livelihood opportunities and participation of different minority groups in societies. Women, girls and youth are important target groups in this work.

Strengthening the economic status of minorities builds a foundation for sustainable development and poverty reduction. To support sufficient income generation, HDI works to enable livelihood opportunities and improvement of employability of people belonging to minorities.

Women with minority backgrounds face various forms of gender-based violence (GBV) which have long-lasting consequences in women's reproductive health. HDI aims at preventing GBV by focusing on the economic empowerment and promotion of human rights of women and combating GBV in all its forms. Moreover, HDI ensures the participation of discriminated groups in order to strengthen democracy in their societies. For this, HDI is building the capacities of organisations representing minority groups so that they can successfully improve the human rights issues in the communities.

4. Cross-cutting themes

To ensure the equal access to digital development in the global world HDI will integrate digital enables in its work, i.e. in career guidance, learning and work life related activities as they fit to the life realities and needs of people. In these activities HDI will cooperate with organisations specialised in digital technology.

The right to economic independence is one of the human rights, and it ensures sustainable livelihood of the individuals and local communities. As entrepreneurship is an income generation activity HDI will ensure that necessary skills and conditions for entrepreneurship are offered to the people in need. This work will be implemented in cooperation with competent local and international actors.

4. Principles of our international work

HDI uses a human rights-based approach in all its work, opposing discrimination in all its forms. Moreover, the HDI promotes locally sustainable development, considering cultural, social and environmental aspects and working in close cooperation with the local partners.

In the international work the HDI utilizes the professional capacity and previous experience gained both in Finland and international cooperation. The international competences of HDI staff will be systematically developed as part of the human resource development.

In its international activities, the HDI follows the OCHA humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. HDI implements a “Do No Harm” policy and works with utmost integrity with the target groups in danger of stigmatisation or refolement. Also, partners must commit to the Code of Conduct of the Helsinki Deaconess Institute, Child protection policy and principles of procurement (unless other, stricter policies are in place).