



# STRATEGY 2023 – 2028

## Our contribution to a globally just socio-ecological transformation

The present day is marked by a growing number of global challenges, which are increasingly escalating to form a complex situation of crisis. These include poverty, hunger, increasing social inequality, lack of gender equality, lack of inclusion and structural discrimination. Pandemics and health crises, armed conflicts, the climate crisis and accelerating destruction of our planet and the resulting refugee movements are also among them. All these crises must be dealt with simultaneously and under mounting time pressure, and require holistic and far-reaching solutions.

This urgently requires a turnaround in political, economic and social action towards a globally just socio-ecological transformation. Global civil society has a central role to play in shaping the necessary processes of change. The Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid NGOs (VENRO) represents development and humanitarian civil society organisations in Germany with regard to politics, the media and the general population. A large number of active member organisations are involved in the Executive Board, our working groups and international networks. Together with their partner organisations in the Global South and the VENRO directorate, they make a significant contribution to the success of VENRO.

VENRO advocates an intersectional, postcolonial and feminist understanding of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, which critically questions structural inequalities and existing power relations and states that a socio-ecological transformation can only succeed if all parties are involved

together in the process equally. In its work, the association places a special focus on the participation and protection of so-called vulnerable groups, such as women, children and young people; the elderly, the poor and the sick; people with disabilities; refugees and migrants; queer people and the LGBTQI+ community; people affected by racism; and all structurally disadvantaged groups and minorities. The main target audience for our work are policy makers, the interested (specialist) public and our members.

Internationally valid human rights treaties, the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the UNESCO BNE 2030 Programme and the commitments of the World Humanitarian Summit provide important reference frameworks for our actions. However, we are not on the right track for hardly any of the international goals. The opposite is true – in many areas we are in fact moving in the wrong direction. Dealing with the climate crisis is one of the greatest challenges that humanity is facing. The massive ecological, social and economic impacts affect people worldwide to varying degrees. Many countries in the Global South are already suffering from the irreversible consequences of global warming, primarily caused by the Global North. Although vulnerable and marginalised groups in particular are losing their livelihoods, hardly any industrialised country is taking sufficient measures to achieve the 1.5 degree target.

This is one of the reasons why the number of people suffering from chronic hunger worldwide has been on the rise since 2015. In addition to the climate crisis, the main cause of food crises are internal and intergovernmental conflicts, which affect almost every area of food systems. Both within and outside Europe, we are confronted with the devastating humanitarian and development consequences of armed conflicts. Instead of resorting to civilian measures for crisis prevention and peacekeeping, more and more actors are deciding to resolve political, economic or social disagreements by force. Through wars and climate-related disasters, the numbers of people displaced by violence and dependent on humanitarian aid has also reached new highs.

Increasing economic and social inequality is a defining structural cause of conflicts, poverty, hunger and global health risks. For decades, the spoils of globalisation have been shared more and more unfairly, both within and between states. As a result of the current crisis situation, the number of people in extreme poverty has increased again for the first time since 1998. This is particularly true of girls and women, who are often the first to lose access to healthy nutrition, school education and age-appropriate health services, while at the same time managing the majority of unpaid care work. But also the profound structural inequalities to the detriment of other marginalised groups were made visible and were further amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, as if under a magnifying glass.

In parallel to these developments, democracy is coming under increasing pressure worldwide. In many countries, due to administrative hurdles, intimidation and criminalisation we are confronted with shrinking civil society spaces. Above all, human rights defenders and environmental activists are increasingly risking their freedom or even their lives for their much-needed engagement.

The modern day, plagued by crises, testifies to the urgency of a systemic change in politics, economy and society. Our vision remains a just, peaceful and economically, ecologically and socially sustainable world without poverty, hunger or preventable diseases. In this vision, decision-makers in Germany and Europe are shaping national and international change processes in such a way that they are consistently aligned with the guiding principle of a globally just, social-ecological transformation. As actors of civil society, we have enough room for manoeuvre in such a world to be influential and motivating.

In order to contribute to the realisation of this vision, VENRO has adopted the following strategy for the years 2023 to 2028. The association has set itself seven strategic objectives, which form the framework for future work priorities. These are pursued on an equal footing, and the order specified is therefore not to be understood as a hierarchy. Each year, the General Assembly also decides on annual targets, which describe concrete intermediate steps for achieving the strategic objectives.

## VENRO OBJECTIVES 2023 – 2028

**VENRO is committed to reducing global injustice and promotes gender-transformative, equal participation worldwide as a guiding principle for all actions.**

The association contributes to a policy that reduces social, economic and political inequality in the long term. This includes access to basic social services such as education, health and social security. To achieve this, VENRO is committed to overcoming structural and individual discrimination, in particular by promoting gender equality, inclusion and the implementation of human and children's rights. In politics, society and its own association, VENRO is committed to a fair distribution of power and an intersectional, power-critical and feminist foreign and development policy. Domestic development policy work and the participation of partners in the Global South are central pillars in establishing association-wide opinions and the shaping the social and political discourse.

**VENRO is committed to incorporating civil crisis prevention and the reduction of structural causes of crisis as priority methods for maintaining peace and security in German and European politics.**

In order to transform existing crises and conflicts and to avoid future ones, the association advocates a holistic approach to German and European foreign, development, climate, health, agricultural and trade policy, in which human security is the guiding principle for all actions. Structural causes of crisis, such as the lack of distributive, participatory and climate justice, must be overcome politically. Together with local partner organisations, VENRO promotes the development of capacities for conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

**VENRO is committed to preventive and reactive humanitarian aid according to modern standards for those affected by armed conflicts, climate and environmental disasters as well as political and economic crises.**

The association advocates principle-oriented and gender-transformative humanitarian aid to political decision-makers in strict compliance with humanitarian law and internationally agreed upon reform processes. These include safe and accessible spaces for refugees and humanitarian actors, the strengthening of local structures and the unrestricted protection of the civilian population, with a special focus on vulnerable groups. VENRO is working with local partner organisations to develop effective responses to new humanitarian challenges, always keeping in mind the principle of Do no Harm.

**VENRO is committed to raising the domestic awareness of global interdependencies and to incorporating domestic development policy as a central task of sustainable future shaping.**

A globally just socio-ecological transformation cannot take place without changes in the Global North. Education for sustainable development and global learning are key factors when it comes to transferring professional and development skills to implement such a transformation. VENRO is committed to a holistic strengthening of domestic development policy towards politics and administration. The association supports civil society actors in promoting awareness of global relationships in society and politics, in raising awareness of global power hierarchies, and in highlighting opportunities for action

and engagement. Instruments for qualitative, effective, power-critical and diversity-oriented domestic work will be further developed.

**VENRO is committed to strengthening development and humanitarian civil society organisations and enabling an environment, in which they can operate without restrictions and achieve their objectives.**

In view of quickly shrinking civil society spaces, one of VENRO's aims is to protect and strengthen civil society actors and human rights defenders worldwide. In Germany and in international networks, the association is committed to ensuring that development and humanitarian civil society organisations, as effective and indispensable actors, participate fully in the practice of humanitarian aid, the enforcement of human rights, the shaping of a just transformation and education for sustainable development.

The association advocates the strengthening of development and humanitarian civil society organisations so that they can achieve their intended effects in the best possible way at home and abroad. In particular, with regard to politics and administration in Germany, VENRO is working to ensure that a favourable political, legal and financial framework is in place. The association also contributes to strengthening the public image of development and humanitarian civil society organisations.

**VENRO is committed to overcoming racism and colonial power relations through a post-colonial understanding in development and humanitarian work.**

Development cooperation and humanitarian aid have historically been shaped by colonialism and racism. VENRO promotes a power-critical examination of the topics of racism, colonialism and the tra-

ditional concept of development. Improving education for sustainable development plays an important role here. The association strengthens the discourse on post-colonialism together with partners from the Global South and thus contributes to a de-colonialisation of the global cooperation of NGOs. VENRO develops measures to overcome structural inequalities, promotes diversity within the association and advocates for it vis-à-vis state actors.

**VENRO is committed to effectively counteracting the climate crisis and achieving global climate justice.**

In order to mitigate the devastating effects of global warming, VENRO is working towards political action to ensure compliance with the Paris Agreement. The association promotes human rights-based climate protection and the consistent implementation of a 1.5 degree policy vis-à-vis political decision-makers. VENRO advocates targeted international climate protection and adaptation measures, sufficient climate financing and compensation for losses and damage, with a special focus on vulnerable groups. In exchange with the partners of the Global South, the association calls for new ways for sustainable economic, infrastructure and social development processes in the sense of a climate-compatible, globally sustainable transformation and also strives for climate compatibility within the association.

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