

Presentation International Conference on Diakonia at Seoul, Korean Diakonia.

By: Evert Jan Hazeleger , Program Director Kerk in Actie of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.

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Title: Towards a fair world

“And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jezus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.” St Matthew 14: 15-16

Introduction (Sheet 1)

In my presentation I will take you along a view key questions.

- what are the main activities of Kerk in Actie as a church-based diaconal organization?
- how do we cooperate with local churches and global networks for our activities?
- how do we raise funds from local churches and other funding resources?
- how do we organize volunteers from the local churches and manage them?

I'm the program director of Kerk in Actie for almost six years now. Before that I was head of the home department of Kerk in Actie. And before that I was a church youth worker and head of the youth department of the PCN. I'm working within the Protestant Church for more than 24 years this year. I thank you all for inviting me to this international conference on Diakonia and for the opportunity to share some of my Diaconal experiences with you. I will do that from a Dutch context with an international angel.

Kerk in Actie of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and main activities.

The Protestant Church in the Netherlands with around 1.8 million members and 1600 local congregations is firmly rooted in the Dutch society. The Protestant Church is part of the world wide ecumenical 'body of Christ' on the local, national, European and global level. This includes partnerships with churches all over the world and membership of organizations like the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, the World Council of Churches, the ACT Alliance and all kinds of church and church-related networks.

The local congregations of the Protestant Church have their own missionary and diaconal work on the local level.

Kerk in Actie is the specialized ministry for missionary and diaconal work of the Protestant Church. Kerk in Actie is part of the Service Organization of the Protestant Church. We support the local congregations in their diaconal and missionary work and are working on behalf of the Protestant Church on a national and global level. On the global level Kerk in Actie works close together with ICCO a Dutch Christian Development organization. This organization was grounded 50 years ago to receive funding for development work from the Dutch government.

Kerk in Actie looks after the most vulnerable people, for people in need and for a more righteous world. Each human being has the right to respect and a dignified existence, irrespective of faith, political conviction, race, sex or nationality. Kerk in Actie is working to consolidate these rights, based on our Christian identity. In our work, Kerk in Actie seeks to follow the example of Jesus Christ, who calls to witness, to love our neighbors and seek for justice.

In the diaconal tradition the purpose and direction is in our key values: compassion, justice and stewardship.

Some characteristics of Kerk in Actie

Christian values

In stewardship the focus is on creating a sustainable society and protection and preservation of the entire creation; in compassion the focus is on being present where the ruptures are in society and be with the most vulnerable people and on the eradication of poverty; in justice the focus is on a more righteous world and the implementation of the three core values in the political, economic, financial and

social structures of the society.

Diaconate is thus shaping the classic seven 'works of mercy' in a broad and comprehensive way, for the well-being and fullness of life of all the people and is handling a coherent agenda for the Global South as well as for the North.

Part of the ecumenical network

Kerk in Actie is part of the international ecumenical networks of (protestant-Christian) churches, religious organizations and organizations allied to churches especially the WCC and the ACT Alliance). By preference we cooperate with organizations in these networks.

The strength of this network is that it is branched worldwide into small villages, in a multitude of organizations and reach all layers of the population. Within this network religious congregations can have direct relations with partner-congregations, often in small-scale projects. The relations in this partner network are in the first place of an ecumenical character and are deeper than merely financing projects. Kerk in Actie is not just another development agency which has as priority to channel the maximum of funds from North to South. Kerk in Actie focuses on linking people across the world and thereby showing that we are all created equal in the image of God.

Partnership

Kerk in Actie is not only a funding organization or donor-organization but it is the diaconal work and missionary work of the Protestant Church. Kerk in Actie chooses to work from the perspective of partnership and to work together with churches and church related organizations with a substantial role for the local churches. Strategic aims and goals are defined together with partners. Partner conferences and the Regional Offices play a crucial role in this process.

To realize her goals Kerk in Actie actively seeks to work together with other organizations and with local groups and (grassroots-) movements with the same goals.

We want to be a reliable partner and want to remain present in politically and religiously sensitive areas and complex situations where there are fractures in society and changes cannot be realized at short notice. The network of our local (religious)partners enables us to be present there.

Partnership with reciprocity

There is more awareness of equality, the necessity for a critical dialogue and of the necessity to work and think in a shared responsibility of the various partners and with various actors striving for the same goals. Therefore partnership with reciprocity is essential in our work. We try to realize this in our programs. Through the support of local congregations in the Netherlands we promote direct involvement. Like exchange programs and a Youth travel program. This is important for living and understanding the diaconal and missionary calling as a Church. It strengthens the bond between the congregations of the protestant Church with the work of our partners and it creates the willingness to support this work in several ways.

Communication

Kerk in Actie works by order of the Protestant Church and her congregations. It is therefore important that the local congregations recognize themselves in the work. Therefore a basic condition is good communication. We also want to reach and interest people outside of the Church. Therefore we also aim for those who want to shape their Christian inspiration in the 'service to the world', but have no formal connection with the church. The challenge is to show the value and the quality of our work to the Dutch society. In various campaigns (e.g. The lent Campaign) we focus on both the Church members and the broader Dutch public. We try to involve them in our work and ask for contributions for our work. In a combination of raising awareness and raising funds. The majority of the local congregations are actively involved in these campaigns.

Cooperation

Kerk in Actie cooperates with ICCO and other organizations with a protestant background and vision. The execution of the foreign work takes place in the combined Regional offices and the International department of ICCO and Kerk in Actie.

Kerk in Actie and ICCO are complementary, reinforcing each other and recognizing each other's profile. In program development and –execution there is one combined approach. For world diaconal work this means amongst others a focus on poverty reduction and exclusion, with attention for the connection between social-cultural, economical, religious and political elements.

In fundraising ICCO contributes also the public funds and relations with other stakeholders, access to business and other back donors. Kerk in Actie aims basically on the private fundraising and on financing by the local congregations of the Protestant Church. Our yearly budget is 24 million euro. 40% comes from local Churches, 40% from individual donors and 20 % from private capital foundations. With this budget we are able to work in 40 counties including the Netherlands.

As the income of Kerk in Actie is under pressure for the last few years (between 2010 and 2014 a decrease of 5% yearly), we've worked on plans to try to increase the income from the congregations of the Protestant Church as well as from private donors. Because of this we've managed to get a slight increase of income from private donors. Beside this, a plan has been developed to work together with the congregations to focus more on fundraising for the diaconal work.

Fundraising policy (sheet 2): A clear corporate story is developed.

Believing is sharing: Together we make up Kerk in Actie. We believe we're here to share with each other: that's how we embody the church in action and how we make it visible.

In our work we're inspired and touched by the story of Jesus and the five loaves and two fish. He blessed the food there was and shared it among the crowd – and there was enough for everyone.

Our calling: to share what we have received

We are the Protestant church in action.

- Around two million members and over 1600 local congregations are active on behalf of their fellow men and women, near and far.
- No one is excluded. All are welcome.
- We are touched and inspired by Jesus Christ and the Bible's call to take care of widows and orphans, prisoners and refugees. Kerk in Actie is committed to the most vulnerable people, to people in need and a more righteous world.

We believe that everyone is created in God's image, so we are all equal. Together we make up the body of Christ. This body knows no misfits: it has eyes and ears, hands and feet. Everyone is a part of this body in their own unique way: different, but always equal.

The church is in action everywhere: from the heart of Rotterdam – helping refugees to remote villages in Uganda- helping internally displaced people. Wherever people believe despite oppression, welcome refugees with open arms, stand up for children in need, care about minorities and embrace those who are excluded.

This clear corporate story helps us to be more visible for the church members en our donors. All workers of Kerk in Actie share this story and are trained to tell this story to our stakeholders, partners en donors.

Ownership and the strengthening of the connection with the local congregations

Kerk in Actie is unable to do its work without a strong basis in the Dutch society. It was emphasized that Kerk in Actie works on behalf of and from the local parishes of the PCN. This was elaborated by directed cooperation in the field of local fundraising. Also the connection with the increasing number of donors of Kerk in Actie was intensified. We held a number of panel discussions with groups of donors. The conclusions of this study was used to strengthen the bond with our most important donors and local congregations..

The 40days- Lenten campaign with the theme "For a change" has been successful. This campaign was carried out together with more than 1100 congregations of the Protestant Church. Every year more and more congregations are getting involved in this campaign. In this campaign we make fundraising materials, background information about our work en we present each week one of our partners. Every year a new theme is chosen.

The 120th National Diaconal Day had as its theme "A heart for the Diaconate". It was about the bond between the input of diaconal work and worldwide challenges. More than a 1000 deacons attended the day. This day is held almost every year since 1891. This day is important for inspiration and sharing experiences.

Organization: The work in 3 departments (sheet 3)

- Home department for the support of the diaconal work done by the 1600 congregations of the PCN. (3 mln)
- Mission department for our mission work and the support of mission work of our worldwide partner Churches and other partners. (10 mln)
- The worldwide diaconal program is part of the ICCO cooperation and is provided by the regional offices in Asia, Africa and Latin America. (11mln (including Humanitarian assistance)

Working areas of Kerk in Actie (sheet 4)

- belief against oppression – supporting minority Churches – building Bridges between faith communities
- belief in the power of local faith communities (food and economic empowerment, supporting the local diaconal work)
- emergency relief, before, during and after disasters (DM)
- migration, legal assistance to refugees, shave passage and shelter, combating human trafficking
- children at risk – combating Child labor, strengthening Child rights

Work of the home department (sheet 5)

You are here to see and learn from our diaconal work in the Netherlands. I will focus a little bit more on the work we do in the Netherlands. These are the diaconal themes we are working on in the Netherlands.

- Poverty reduction- advocacy, local support, helping people with debts..
- Refugees – humanitarian assistants, advising local congregations, showing best practices
- Sustainability – promoting sustainable lifestyle and praxis by Churches (Green Churches)
- Social Service – advocacy to local governments, Churches as a caring and providing community
- Support for the local diaconal work – good examples, training programs, pilot projects, newsletters, magazine for deacons, training on the job, tailored advice, conferences, e-learning programs.

In the Netherlands we've tried to seek more contact with the local diaconal work and we've tried to give more support to it. Focal points of the work were combatting poverty on a local level, supporting the deacons, attention for sustainability as a diaconal theme and to stand up for a humane asylum policy.

Successful local executed projects are:

- the network of parishes engaged with the "Schuldhulpmaatjes" (helping people who are in great debt). This network involves now more than 100 congregations and 1500 volunteers in our anti-poverty work.
- In the autumn of 2012 the first meeting took place within the framework of the so-called "green churches". One hundred and fifty people representing a large number of parishes attended. More than 100 local Churches and 900 volunteers are active in this network now.
- There was a frequent call for attention for the position of the asylum seekers and support was given to lobby activities and to individuals in urgent need of help. A network of local volunteers was grounded. We support them with a training on the job program and adequate information.

Good to know that most of the work is done by voluntary deacons in the local congregations. In the PCN there are about 10.000 Deacons and more than 100.000 other volunteers working for local diaconal work.

Our approach: We connect We share We support We identify (sheet 6)

We connect: We serve the church in action worldwide by bringing together congregations, organizations and people who want to share what they have received. We establish contacts, for example by organizing a conference in Indonesia or a National Deacons' Day in the Netherlands.

We share: We serve the church by sharing what we have received: money, knowledge, experience and time. We do this at home and abroad. We encourage others to share too, for example by collecting money or by doing voluntary work.

We support: We serve the church by providing advice, inspiration and materials to people and congregations all over the world. Church social services, committees for global ministries and partner organizations can count on our commitment, staff and financial support.

We identify: We serve the church by identifying abuse and injustice worldwide. We expose these issues and act on them, thus acting as a voice for those who are not heard in the public and political arena. Our areas of work: belief against oppression, belief in the power of local faith communities, emergency relief, migration and human trafficking, children in need and minority rights.

We are not alone: The important role of the World council of Churches and the ACT Alliance.

ACT is a worldwide Alliance with about 140 member organizations in more than 90 countries. Some members are national churches with special divisions which focus on humanitarian aid and development (like Kerk in Actie). Together with ICCO, Kerk in Actie feels that the ACT Alliance should be the network of churches and church organizations in the field of the diakonia, development, humanitarian aid and advocacy. Within the ACT Alliance Kerk in Actie participated in joint emergency aid. Recently in Syria, Nepal and in other countries where immediate help was needed. Kerk in Actie and ICCO take part in a large number of national ACT forums in the 40 countries where ICCO and Kerk in Actie are active. In this way fragmentation can be prevented and by joining forces we can increase our strength.

'Think global and act local' is an expanding slogan. The entire inhabited world has become more and more one 'body'. What people do on a micro level matters and has an impact on a national and global level. And the other way around, the worldwide crisis in migration, economy, climate, food and access to raw materials demonstrates how hugely disastrous the impact of macro systems can be in the daily life of ordinary people.

Working within a worldwide Alliance makes the connections from local to local in a more complex world possible. In a world that becomes smaller and smaller, working together is more needed. The members of the church supports Kerk in Actie but they are also critical towards the work. I think working together in the ACT Alliance makes better communication with the Dutch congregations and donors possible. Also in sharing the impact of our work. We can learn from each other. Also we are able to work more together towards an joint agenda for tomorrow regarding the highly needed lifestyle change of Countries and people. (for instance on climate change).

Development cooperation and Emergency aid is and will remain necessary, both in case of catastrophes and for the more vulnerable people who cannot help themselves right now. Although there is no doubt over this, it seems that the political motivation in Europe regarding partnership for development depends more and more on the question, whether it is profitable for ourselves and for our companies. Keeping what we have appears to be more important than fair sharing with each other!

Kerk in Actie, as a member of the ACT Alliance, is making a different choice and focuses on responsibility of partners, governments and the civil society to work in their individual context towards a more sustainable and righteous society.

A challenge for us the coming years is to hold on to the connection of compassion and justice, and to make sure that our work benefits the poorest and the most vulnerable. That's also the purpose of the Sustainable Development Goals on poverty. When we can hold on to that and find new ways to work together as an alliance than the ACT Alliance is successful and more visible (as Action by Churches and Christians Together).

To conclude: What's my dream for Kerk in Actie as part of the world wide ACT Alliance Network.

That is a very big question! Almost too big in a world with the large international crises we are facing now. In a world unable to solve problems like the civil war in Syria, ongoing tensions between nations, the growing tensions between religions, the unjust of human trafficking and exploitation of migrants . In a world that cannot create sustainable systems of fair share, fair care, fair climate, fair trade and fair migration.

My dream is to make together steps in the direction of 5 times fair. Fair is my expression of systems that are in the core itself built on compassion, justice and stewardship. Become more **FAIR** is the diaconal agenda for the coming years.

Local action in a global society for fair share, fair care, fair trade, fair climate and fair migration is needed. The ACT Alliance makes it possible to work in this direction both in the north – Europe/ The Netherlands - and the global south.

The story of Christ feedeth the five thousand is a great inspiration of myself and my organization. The end of this story shows the power of Christ and his lesson for us about sharing.

“And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven , he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled, and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.” St Matthew 14: 19-20

That's the fullness of life with Christ.

Thank you for your attention.

Evert Jan Hazeleger
Program Director Kerk in Actie

Summary related to the 4 key questions

1. Main activities of Kerk in Actie

Diaconal work of the PCN. The hand and the feet of the church in the Dutch society:

- Support local diaconal work that is done by the voluntarian deacons
- Raising funds in the Dutch society and congregations of the Church for the diaconal and missionary work.
- Support partners en projects in their work in 40 countries worldwide.
- Working area's: poverty, social care, refugees and sustainable growth.

2. Cooperation with local churches and global networks.

Churches:

- Fundraising strategy for local churches
- Capacity building programs for volunteers
- Providing best practices for local diaconal actions
- Research and development for local diaconal expertise

Global networks:

- Joint forces with ACT Alliance
- Humanitarian assistance
- Joint advocacy
- Theological reflection
- Global learning agenda

3. fundraising strategy

- A strong corporate story known by all workers
- Show the impact of the work on local level
- Linking congregations of the PCN with specific project and partners in countries.
- Do not do everything but make a choice
 - Believing against oppression
 - Strengthening local churches and communities

- Humanitarian assistance
- Child labor and Child rights
- Campaigns 3 times a year
- Lent campaign about one specific theme
- Summer campaign about humanitarian assistance
- Advent campaign about children in risk.
- Diversification of funding
 - Churches
 - Individual donor
 - Private Capital funds

4. Organizing volunteers

Deacons

- Training programs (including e-learning)
- Conferences
- Magazine
- Advisory service

Volunteers in task forces on specific issues.

- Training on the job
- Sharing best practices
- e-learning