

# Dorcas

*Our approach to change  
and impact*

How Dorcas realises  
its programmes



## We are Dorcas

Dorcas is a faith-based organisation that invests in sustainable change in the lives of people who are marginalised. We create opportunities for individuals to develop themselves further, and if necessary, we provide for their basic needs. We invest in resilient, self-organising communities that work together to solve their problems. Lastly, we contribute to a just society in which everyone can participate.



Our work and the theories underlying this are informed and directed by scientific research and evaluation reports. In other words, our approach is evidence-based. The starting point for our work is a theory of change. This outlines how we realise change and how we expect it to contribute to the impact we want to achieve. We have developed a detailed guide that describes the theories of change we use and how these are translated into our programmes and way of working. This document you are reading summaries that guide and provides an introduction to how Dorcas works.

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*The boundaries used on maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by Dorcas.*



\*We realise more impact in South Sudan by working closely together with ZOA.



# Our philosophy of change

At Dorcas, we believe in the God-given value and potential of every single person. Our faith motivates us to create hope and long-term perspectives in volatile and complex situations and to persist in realising durable relationships for sustainable change despite frequent setbacks.

The Dorcas philosophy of change is the theory of change that translates our beliefs, worldview and principles into a solid framework that systematically describes how ‘we do things’. The programme guide ensures we can define and effectively contribute to the impact we want to achieve while remaining true to our core values.

## Our ambition towards change

Dorcas views poverty as a condition in which people cannot realise their intellectual, material, physical, social and spiritual needs and capacities. This kind of poverty is often related to exclusion mechanisms and barriers within society. We want to contribute to the protection, inclusion and resilience of people living in poverty, experiencing exclusion or caught in a crisis.

## Dorcas sees several root causes of poverty and injustice:

- Conflicts and violence.
- Inadequate living environment.
- Injustice and poor governance.
- Natural hazards.
- Negative worldview and mindset.

We seek to make a positive difference where these issues impact people's lives so that individuals can develop their talents, realise their potential and flourish in just and fair communities and societies. The transformation of people and communities can only be accomplished if change is worked on at three different levels simultaneously: individual, community and society.



This ultimate goal of transformation is what we call our change ambition.

## With this change ambition, we seek to achieve a six-fold impact:

- Restored dignity, hope and ability.
- Resilient livelihoods.
- Strong, inclusive and dynamic community structures.
- Government and institutions held accountable.
- Safe and peaceful environment.
- Inclusive access to basic services.

## We realise this impact through the following principles derived from our faith-based identity:

- We focus on people who are marginalised and believe in the potential of people.
- We facilitate the flourishing and well-being of individuals and societies.
- We implement projects that are community-based and locally led.
- We cooperate with local community-based organisations and strengthen their capacities.
- We realise sustained change through long-term commitments.
- We act as a catalyst and “ConnActor” to enable partnerships with impact.
- We seek to be impartial in who we hire, assist or partner with.

# Our building blocks of change

**Our generic approach to change has three basic building blocks called programme concepts:**

- Humanitarian Assistance and Recovery (core principle: saving lives).
- Social Empowerment and Protection (core principle: social).
- Inclusive Entrepreneurship (core principle: economic).

The core principles steer each programme concept's theory of change. Dorcas applies the programme concepts along the nexus of the three interlinked pillars of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actions. When the programme concepts are translated into specific integrated programmes, they are further shaped by our mainstreaming themes and approaches. Mainstreaming themes are what Dorcas considers to be the cornerstones of a flourishing community and are therefore included in all programme concepts. These are Faith@Work, inclusion, conflict sensitivity and climate resilience. An approach is a defined thematic area based on the Dorcas way of working and sector standards. These can be supported by asset-based community development, multistakeholder partnerships and advocacy. Examples of approaches are given in the following sections that describe the different programme concepts.



## Humanitarian Assistance and Recovery

Humanitarian Assistance and Recovery (HAR) focuses on saving people's lives and preserving their dignity during disasters or crises. People's immediate needs are met, communities are enabled to become resilient to shocks and governments are actively involved in contributing to safer and more peaceful communities.



## Social Empowerment and Protection

Social Empowerment and Protection (SEP) seeks to ensure that the poorest and most marginalised have access to basic services, like health and education, and are empowered in their social development. This is realised by organising and mobilising communities to solve their own problems and work on opportunities through asset-based community development processes.



## Inclusive Entrepreneurship

Inclusive Entrepreneurship (IE) enables disadvantaged people and groups to acquire the attitudes, competences and skills they need to earn an income and build their dreams. This is realised by creating social and economic value through entrepreneurial livelihoods and applying it to self-employment, small businesses, member-based entities or social enterprises.

### The approaches we use within HAR are:

- Cash and voucher assistance.
- Food security and livelihoods.
- Water, sanitation and hygiene.
- Shelter and non-food items.
- Mental health and psychological support.

### The approaches we use within SEP are:

- Community safety nets.
- Future for Children.
- FLOURISH.

### The approaches we use within IE:

- DREAMS (developing resilient entrepreneurship and access to market systems).
- Entrepreneurship.
- Employability.



## Our standardised and uniform approach

The three programme concepts provide a uniform approach across the Dorcas organisation that can be implemented in countries and programmes in a context-sensitive manner. This brings clarity and focus to our work, facilitates our accountability processes, and makes it easier to find appropriate donors and partners. Depending on the context, we create more sustainable impact by interlinking or consecutively realising the approaches from different programme concepts.

### Example: Participatory Integrated Planning

In Tanzania and Mozambique, Dorcas applies Participatory Integrated Planning (PIP) with smallholder farmers, as an effective bottom-up development approach. PIP is an integration of various agricultural activities and farm planning at the individual, community, and village levels for enhanced sustainable change towards food production and good land stewardship. The project uses an integrated approach to secure increased economic resilience, improve food security in communities, enhance climate resilience, increase resilient farms with



healthy lands and support communities to better prepare for disasters. These farmers become actors of change who are determined to make their vision become reality: a more resilient farm as the foundation for a more sustainable future.

### Example: Korça integrated development programme

In Albania, Dorcas developed the Korça Integrated Development Programme to support older people and families experiencing poverty and vulnerability. Social Empowerment and Protection was chosen as the leading programme concept. The programme contained four interlinked components that created synergy and made the interventions more sustainable. These were Future4Children, abandoned grannies through Community Safety Nets, Flourishing Families and Enterprising for Social Impact. An overarching aspect was reaching local and national government to request more attention, improved policy and action for marginalised groups. This successful programme laid the foundation for a new programme that focusses on the integrated development of vulnerable groups in the Korça region.



## Change we realise on the ground

We develop projects in partnership with the local communities where we work. They have a direct say in what they want to change and why. And we support them to achieve their goals. Dorcas assesses the situation, determines what resources the community can contribute to the project and any additional training or resources required. The project plan takes into account any sensitivities in the local situation, states the role of each stakeholder in the project and details how the project will be monitored and evaluated. The local community is involved in all stages of the project: design, realisation and monitoring and evaluation.



## Why we value partnerships

Dorcas works in partnerships because we realise we can achieve more impact by working together. Our successful collaborations with NGOs, faith- and community-based organisations, the private sector, government, research institutes, and investors are built on committed relationships, trust and shared values. Through the partnerships we develop, we seek to recognise, respect and strengthen the leadership of local authorities and to develop the capacities of local communities.

## Why we set goals and monitor progress

Dorcas sets medium and long-term goals for achieving the desired impact in its projects. The route we take to achieve a goal is called a pathway to change. It enables us to monitor progress, evaluate effectiveness, provide accountability and learn from our experiences (the so-called monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning cycle).

Accountability to all stakeholders is a crucial aspect of the Dorcas approach. Stakeholders include our own Executive and Supervisory Boards (are we on track to achieve our strategic objectives?) and our resourcing and implementing partners that make our work possible. However, and perhaps most importantly, we want to provide clear accountability to the individuals, groups and communities who participate in our programmes so they can take responsibility for realising their future.



### A greenhouse radically changed our lives

'I hope for a better future for our children, relatives and community. We can achieve that if good people are committed to helping and supporting us. Dorcas are such good people.'

Read Anila's story on our website. Scan the QR-code.



We fight poverty, exclusion and crisis.  
We empower marginalised people  
and communities to flourish.  
This is how we follow Jesus Christ.