

About us

With Righteous Anger and Tenderness at the Side of the Poor

MISEREOR is the German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation. For over 50 years MISEREOR has been committed to fighting poverty in Africa, Asia and Latin America. MISEREOR's support is available to any human being in need – regardless of their religion, ethnicity or gender.

Changes cannot be prescribed from outside. MISEREOR therefore believes in supporting initiatives driven and owned by the poor and the disadvantaged. This is because in MISEREOR's experience it is they themselves who possess the strength to improve their lives sustainably. We support them in their efforts in accordance with the principle of help toward self-help. On the ground, projects are run by local organisations. This ensures that the project work is geared to the needs and way of life of the people involved.

MISEREOR is right there at the side of the weak

MISEREOR supports the weakest members of society: the poor, the sick, the hungry and the disadvantaged. It is of no importance whether those in need of help are men or women, what religious beliefs they hold or where they come from. To love one's neighbour is a basic attitude of Christian life, and MISEREOR's vocation is to translate this attitude into concrete action; the poor are our sisters and brothers, who have a right to a life of dignity. MISEREOR supports them in realising it. The organisation does not pursue any ends other than the promotion of development. The mandate given to MISEREOR by the German Bishops rules out the promotion of pastoral or missionary measures.

'Misereor super turbam – I have compassion on the crowd' (Mk 8.2): These words of Jesus contained in the Bible gave the organisation its name. Compassion for people in need has remained the defining underlying motivation and characteristic of MISEREOR's activities to this day.

The dream of a more just world

The development projects supported by MISEREOR are as diverse as the causes and faces of poverty. They all have one thing in common, though. They all focus on the whole human person. As well as satisfying basic needs such as food security, they also help ensure that human rights are upheld and the way is paved for the people concerned to live in dignity.

Our ideal would be a world in which all human beings are able to participate in shaping their communities, in which cultural diversity is recognised and promoted, and in which equality is a reality. All these are overarching goals that are, among others, pursued in project planning.

"The special thing about MISEREOR is that they have stuck with us through thick and thin, through the good times and the bad."

Winifred Valentine,
MISEREOR partner in Liberia

Organisation chart

MISEREOR's working structure here
for download
(pdf, 20 KB)

‘Righteous anger’ and ‘Tenderness’

By using the terms ‘righteous anger’ and ‘tenderness’ MISEREOR is underlining the special motivation at the heart of its activities. What we mean is the righteous
anger over injustice and suffering that is rooted in human compassion, especially for the poor, the disenfranchised and the disempowered.

Since 1958 MISEREOR has represented the Catholic Church’s commitment to stand at the side of the poor, the sick and the oppressed, and join them in the struggle to overcome poverty and create decent living conditions.

MISEREOR has strong supporters

Since 1962 the German Government has also relied on MISEREOR’s expertise. Because the organisation works on a partner-oriented basis and close to the poor, every year the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development provides it with considerable sums of tax monies for development projects, which now account for two-thirds of MISEREOR’s project budget.

This cooperation is based on mutual trust, and two principles: The German Development Ministry has pledged not to tie these monies to political conditionalities.
At the same time it must be ensured that no pastoral or missionary measures, which in any case are not included in MISEREOR’s mandate, are promoted with public funds.