



It's easier to get through times of need together: For many Kolping members worldwide, the association was an important support in 2020.

“Together we achieved a great deal“

Facing the Coronavirus pandemic, the work of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL Cooperation e.V. in 2020 was confronted with previously unknown challenges. In this interview, General Praeses Msgr. Ottmar Dillenburg and General Secretary Dr. Markus Demele look back on the past year.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic turned the whole world upside down and changed it. To what extent did this also affect the work of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL?

Dr. Markus Demele: We were very saddened by the reports from our partner countries that people, within a very short period of time, were no longer able to work and were therefore no longer able to feed their families. At the same time we were motivated to increase our commitment. Of course, the pandemic also ruined many plans. Events could not take place, institutions and offices were closed, many staff members worked in their home offices and most Kolping Families around the world could not meet. As a result, the associational and project work came to a standstill or became impossible almost everywhere. In addition, the travel restrictions

due to the pandemic made project coordination with our partners much more difficult. However, we are pleased to have achieved a great deal together in 2020.

What successes do you see here in particular?

Msgr. Ottmar Dillenburg: An enormous success is that quite a few projects, especially measures in the area of rural development, continued as planned. But in almost all other project areas, too, the partners have done their utmost to achieve the project goals set or at least to create the conditions for the planned goals to be achieved in 2021. In the education and training projects, many partners succeeded in pushing digitization strongly, so that we can see a leap in online offerings. In addition to the usual „everyday work“, almost all Kol-

ping Families and National Kolping Associations of the partners also dedicated themselves to emergency aid in the pandemic year 2020 and through this commitment made an important contribution to alleviating local hardships. The emergency aid was made possible by the enormous success of the Kolping Corona Fund. For this we would like to thank all donors from the bottom of our hearts.

How did KOLPING INTERNATIONAL come to establish a Corona Emergency Fund? And what is supported with these funds?

Demele: After the outbreak of the pandemic in spring 2020, it quickly became clear that we would not be able to continue our regular, sustainable self-help projects in this emergency situation. In an acute emergency, help must be provided quickly. Ensuring survival was at the top of our agenda. We advertised for a fund for this emergency aid and were able to collect more than one million euros in 2020: an incredible performance of solidarity from the Kolping members in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and South Tyrol/ Italy. The money from the fund was used to finance food and hygiene kits, educational teams and protective clothing, and later on more and more also seeds for self-sufficiency and various forms of aid for schoolchildren. Two things in particular impressed us during these emergency relief operations: First, the commitment of the young members in the association was enormous. Numerous volunteers set off to the remotest regions to deliver packages and help. In addition, many beneficiaries have told us that it was not only the material support that was important to them. It was just as important to feel that they were not left alone in their distress. The Kolping Association put into practice its values in an energetic way and in solidarity.

Is it already possible to foresee whether the Coronavirus pandemic will also cause lasting changes for the work of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL?

Dillenburg: At the moment, I do not see any change for our work in the long run. Among other things, our focus is now on taking stock of whether partner countries have been set back in their development by the pandemic, and how we can respond to this. However, it is already foreseeable that we will face major challenges in the area of education, as face-to-face teaching has been suspended for a long time in many countries. We perceive very positively that Kolping Families in Europe

take the crisis as a reason to increase their commitment for the people in the One World.

Will worldwide development cooperation become more important than ever after the pandemic?

Demele: Definitely yes! All the initial figures from the United Nations indicate that global inequality has increased enormously as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic and that we have been set back years in terms of poverty reduction. There will be a lot of catching up to do in the coming years. We hope very much that the rich nations in particular will provide sufficient funds to finance globally sustainable development in the future. KOLPING INTERNATIONAL is in any case ready to actively support this catch-up work and to make its contribution to the shaping of a fairer world.



In 2020, ensuring the survival of members in need was an important part of the worldwide work.



Together at a distance: Even during the pandemic, many Kolping Families continued their work.

The Asian Kolping Associations already received local personnel support last November. Does KOLPING want to be more present in Asia in the future?

Dillenburg: At the end of last year, Dr. Hildegard Hagemann was sent to Vietnam as a specialist via Agiamondo. Since then she has been supporting our partner association in Vietnam and the partners in the other Asian Kolping countries. The goal is, on the one hand, to strengthen and expand the good project work and the successful association work of the local partners with her help. On the other hand, it is planned to further develop the networking of the Asian associations at continental level in



After sometimes long periods of closure, the Kolping educational centers in Africa resumed their operations.

order to promote mutual learning and the exchange of „good practice examples“ among one another.

What are the focal points or special events of the Association that are on the agenda of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL in 2021?

Demele: In autumn we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the beatification of Adolph Kolping in our international community. Unfortunately, we had to postpone the celebrations that were planned for this occasion in Rome in October 2021 to next year. This is because the pandemic, unfortunately, still has us firmly in its grip. At the project level, this means that in 2021 we will continue to support our partners in fighting the pandemic in their countries or, where already possible, in continuing regular project measures. In April, vaccination rates in most African countries were still below three percent. This shows that there is still a lot to do before normality returns to the countries of the Global South. In the coming months, our partners in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe will continue to provide us with very differentiated reports on the needs they have to alleviate locally. However, we are confident that this year we will be more and more able to return to our core mission: to build strong associations and strong civil societies that actively work for justice, sustainability and the common good in their countries.



KOLPING Vietnam is looking forward to the pilgrimage to Rome in 2022 and prays for an early canonization of Adolph Kolping.

2020 at a glance



9,000 Kolping Families

with about 400,000 Kolping members in a total of 60 countries form a global solidarity community.



24 employees

work at KOLPING INTERNATIONAL Cooperation e.V. in Cologne, 12 full-time and 12 part-time. Three local consultants accompany the local partner associations.



10.7 million euros

were received as donations (around 4.8 million euros) and from public funding (around 5.8 million euros).



41 partner associations

with 171 projects were supported: including 14 partners in Latin America, 12 in Africa, 7 in Asia and 8 in Central and Eastern Europe.



23,723 individual donors

proved their trust in our worldwide project work. About 85 percent of them are Kolping members.



603 groups

have supported our work with donations, including 357 Kolping Families and numerous diocesan and regional associations, schools, societies and companies.