Difäm
Gesundheit in der Einen Welt

Reasons for Hope

Annual report 2024

www.difaem.de

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„A COUNTRY CANNOT REST"

The Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot rest. A war is still raging over the country's valuable resources. This year, the situation has worsened once again: The city of Goma was a refuge for tens of thousands of people who wanted to escape the ruthless fighting. Now the city has been taken over by rebels after bloody clashes - and countless people are living in precarious conditions. Difäm Weltweit organises pharmaceutical supplies for hospitals, finances emergency aid projects for women who have been victims of sexualised violence and supports its partners in their valuable work. Please support us with your donation!

Difäm Weltweit
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DEAR READER!

The woman on the cover of this annual report lived in a refugee camp near the city of Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She lived there under difficult conditions - presumably she had to leave everything behind when she fled. But still her face radiates confidence and hope. Unfortunately, her hopes were shattered. While we were writing the articles for this annual report, Goma was captured by fighters of the rebel group M23. The refugee camps were largely destroyed and the woman on the cover photo is presumably on the run again. What gives us reason to hope in the face of such news?

It is the people who live on site. Even under the most difficult conditions and after hard setbacks, they find the strength to carry on. Our partner organisations in Congo, Malawi, Guinea and many other countries don't get discouraged and are doing great work for health in the One World. We accompanied and supported them in a total of 76 projects in the year 2024. We have compiled a selection of these in this annual report.

They include major projects such as the Mobile Health Wallet. Here, the payment service of mobile phone providers is used so that people can save money for healthcare costs and receive specific support - a pioneering approach to healthcare financing.
However, there are also projects that achieve great things on a small scale . Such as the construction of wells and the fight against parasitic sand fleas (jiggers) in Kenya. They are all testimony to the continuous and reliable cooperation between Difäm Weltweit and its partner organisations, which we will continue in the year 2025.

We are grateful that you faithfully support us in our project work and are pleased to give an account of this with our annual report. It is the donors in Germany and our partner organisations in Africa that make our projects a reality - and thus give many people good reasons for hope.

The Difäm Weltweit team with

Dr. Gisela Schneider
Difäm Director until her retirement at the end of 2024

»EVERYTHING YOU DO BE DONE IN LOVE.«
MOTTO FOR THE YEAR 2024
1 CORINTHIANS 16:14

A YEAR OF CHANGE

'Everything you do be done in love.' Difäm Weltweit started the year 2024 with this motivating motto - and it was a year full of changes. The COVID projects, which had tied up many resources in recent years, were successfully completed. There were also numerous personnel changes. At the same time, the newly developed strategy was launched.

FEWER PROJECT FUNDS, MORE CHALLENGES

The small project fund for COVID projects was successfully completed. On the one hand, this long-term project showed how effectively and efficiently the Difäm Weltweit team works. On the other hand, the completion of the project also entailed financial cuts. This is because it presented Difäm Weltweit with challenges in terms of counter-financing for personnel costs that were previously covered by funding . The year therefore ended with a moderate deficit - which could, however, be offset by successful fundraising measures. Despite all the upheaval, 76 projects with a total volume of 1.43 million euros were realised - a strong sign of stability and renewal.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1 - CLINICAL CARE AND BASIC HEALTH

23 projects (432,928 euros) focussed on basic health and clinical care. In Malawi, a major Engagement Global/bengo co-financed mental health project was launched for refugees from the Congo and Burundi in the Dzaleka refugee camp. Other priorities were cervical cancer prevention in Congo and strengthening sexual and reproductive health in Guinea and Sierra Leone through the ASSET approach. In Tanzania, over 3,000 people benefited from the INUKA project with palliative medical care.

GOAL 2 - MEDICINES ACCESSIBLE AND SAFE

Twelve projects (362,100 euros) focussed on improving access to medicines. In addition to supporting central pharmacies in West Africa and improving pharmaceutical standards in the local church healthcare facilities, the focus was on combating substandard and counterfeit medicines and working with the ecumenical pharmaceutical network EPN. In addition, large solar systems were installed on health facilities in Liberia.

GOAL 3 - STRENGTHEN HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS

With 17 projects (312,771 euros), Difäm Weltweit contributed to the improvement of health systems: from the development of Christian health networks and improved data collection through to the 'Mobile Health Wallet' - an innovative project for digital health financing. Other highlights: the expansion of the nursing school in Nebobongo and a new women's clinic in Guinea (together with the global United Methodist Church).

GOAL 4 – PARTNERSHIP AT EQUAL LEVEL

We want to continue to promote dialogue with our partners and involve them even more closely in decisions. The EPN Forum in Tanzania with over 200 participants and a partner workshop in eastern Congo, sponsored by BfdW and Difäm Weltweit, contributed to this. The forum brought together over 30 participants - a stroke of luck, as war is now raging there. Such an encounter would no longer be possible at the present time .

GOAL 5 – EDUCATION AS A BASIS

The 12 educational projects (168,660 euros) ranged from further training in fistula surgery in the Congo to the gynaecological specialist training of a Guinean colleague in Togo and the development of e-learning courses in Sierra Leone. We also supported numerous training courses for nurses and a scholarship programme for midwives in Chad. The education programme was also active in Germany: More than 70 events and the course in tropical medicine and public health took place in 2024.

GOAL 6 – HELP IN EMERGENCIES

In 2024, there were a total of 12 emergency aid projects (160,896 euros). Although aid to Ukraine and demand from the hospitals there also decreased, we

were able to deliver medicines, equipment and medical supplies worth almost 57,000 euros to the war-torn country. Larger emergency aid projects were also implemented in Burkina Faso and Congo. The needs there will continue to increase in 2025 - the fights in eastern Congo are directly affecting our partners. Many have had to flee, but some are still holding out on the ground - especially the teams in Goma and Bukavu. Work is also continuing unimpeded in north-eastern Congo, where Difäm Weltweit is currently supporting the construction of a clinic in Rwankole, among other places.

COMMUNICATION: GREAT PUBLICITY, MANY DONATIONS

Despite all crises: Communication was running at full speed. The result: over 2 million euros in donations - more than in the pre-corona period. The Tübingen betting campaign was particularly successful with an outcome of over 130,000 euros and a huge media impact. New donors joined in. The legacy fundraising campaign and the Difäm Foundation for Health also made progress. The first information event on the topic of inheritance - held by experienced notary and long-standing supporter Klaus M. Wetzel - was very well received. Particularly encouraging: in 2024, several wills were opened that favoured Difäm and were mostly based on decades of contact with the legatees - a clear sign of the importance of trusting relationships.

A YEAR OF TRANSITIONS

The year 2024 was characterised by personnel changes. Nevertheless, thanks to a joint effort by the team, the work of Difäm Weltweit could be continued consistently and reliably. In 2025 , a phase of new personnel starts at various levels in order to hold on to the dream of Health in One World also in the future. Difäm founder Paul Lechler once said: 'Our Christianity must not just be a world view, but must prove itself through action.' We continue to work in this spirit - supported by a strong foundation and the will to stand up for healing, justice and humanity even in difficult times. Wars, the climate crisis, cuts to public budgets - all of these challenge us. But with commitment, creativity and the trust of our supporters, we can continue on this path.

	Strategic goal	Number of projects	Subsidised amount in euros	Priority countries
1	Difäm Weltweit and its partners empower communities to promote health. Clinical healthcare for people, especially in disadvantaged regions, is improved.	23	432.928	Congo, Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Malawi, Tanzania
2	Together with its partners, Difäm is helping to improve access to good quality and affordable medicines.	12	362.100	Cross-national, Tanzania, Guinea, Liberia, Congo, Sierra Leone
3	Together with its partners, Difäm helps to strengthen the church health systems in the partner countries.	17	312.771	Guinea, Sierra Leone, Congo, Malawi, Burkina Faso
4	Difäm actively involves partner organisations in its work and decision-making processes.	0	0	
5	Difäm Weltweit enables networked learning locally and worldwide on the topics of health, development and public health. This is based on the human right to health and on Christian values.	12	168.669	Sierra Leone, Chad, Guinea, Tanzania, Congo
6	Basis: Support for Difäm's partner organisations, quickly and unbureaucratically in emergency situations.	12	160.896	Ukraine, Congo, Burkina Faso, transnational
	Subsidised amount	**76 Projects**	**1.437.364**	

THE PATH OF A DIFÄM PROJECT

Every year, Difäm Weltweit handles between 60 and 70 projects worldwide, moving funds totalling several million euros. These include donations as well as grants from government agencies or private organisations. To ensure that we fulfil our responsibility, all projects follow a fixed process, which we have simplified here:

THE PROJECT IDEA

Our partner organisations develop a project idea. Together, all consultants of Difäm weltweit discuss whether the project approach is technically sensible, financially viable and realisable. The question of whether and how the project fits in with the strategic goals of Difäm Weltweit is also clarified. A simple majority decides whether the project will be pursued further.

THE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The partner organisation can now turn the project idea into a concrete project proposal. This involves a detailed dialogue with Difäm Weltweit and other project participants. The aim is to develop the project in such a way that it is technically convincing and can be implemented locally. Targets are developed and corresponding indicators are defined to measure the impact.

THE BUDGET

Before a decision is made as to whether the project will be implemented, the costs must be clarified. A detailed budget is drawn up together with the partner organisation. The project management experts check the figures. Once the financial outlay has been determined, the sources from which funds can be utilised must be clarified. Most projects are financed by donations as well as grants from other donors, such as Engagement Global or Bread for the World. Here, one euro of donations can become four euros of project funds.

INTERNAL COORDINATION AND APPROVAL

The responsible officers draw up a detailed, written project application. In addition to the content and budget, it also contains information on the process, the stages in which the approved funds are to flow and the intervals at which reports are to be submitted. This written application is then reviewed by the project approval team. If the project is deemed worthwhile, funding is secured and the impact is measurable, the project is implemented.

THE CONTRACT

The content, scope and procedure of the project are set out in a contract. The draft is only submitted to the partner organisation for signature once it has been checked by the consultant and the project management team. After countersignature by the Difäm directorate, a binding project agreement is drawn up.

THE PAYMENTS

Depending on the progress of the project, the partner organisations request disbursements, which they justify in detail. The content of the requests is checked by the consultant and their financial and accounting plausibility is checked by the project management team. Only then are payments authorised.

THE REPORTS

Our partner organisations submit detailed reports on the progress of the project at agreed intervals. The reports describe the progress of the project in terms of content, successes and challenges. The interim status is compared with the content-related and financial indicators that have been defined in advance. On this basis, the progress of the project is continuously analysed and readjusted if necessary.

THE EVALUATION

Many projects are analysed by an independent body after completion. This external report provides Difäm with a neutral view of the project results and can use the findings for future projects.

DIFÄM WELTWEIT TRANSPARENT

Difäm Weltweit is part of the supporting organisation Deutsches Institut für Ärztliche Mission e. V. The supporting organisation has a General Assembly and an elected supervisory body, the Board of Directors. The General Assembly elects a Board of Directors, which is responsible for the overall work of the organisation. The supervisory body works on an honorary basis and receives no remuneration. The Executive Board works on a full-time basis. The remuneration and expense allowances of the Executive Board are disclosed.

Difäm Weltweit has an organisational structure with clear rules on internal competencies and areas of responsibility as well as signatory powers. The annual external audit covers the correctness of the bookkeeping and the annual financial statements, the correctness of the management and the economical and efficient use of funds. The auditors' reports are submitted to the supervisory body and the General Assembly. The members' meeting approves the actions of the Executive Board at the annual meeting.

The experience of our employees and their sincere commitment to fulfilling the central goals and values of Christian healthcare ensure that all donations are used conscientiously. Difäm Weltweit has been awarded the donation seal of approval by the German Central Institute for Social Issues (DZI) since 1996.

Further information on the organisation chart, the transparency guidelines and the articles of association can be found at:

www.difaem.de/transparenz
www.difaem.de/ueber-uns

SAVE MONEY WITH YOUR MOBILE PHONE

In African countries, the issue of financing is a crucial factor that prevents many people from accessing healthcare. With mAkib'Afya, Difäm Weltweit and its partners DOMECC and mTomady have broken new ground: a virtual wallet is created via the mobile phone, which users can only use for healthcare expenses. On the one hand, they can put money aside for health in good times. On the other hand, aid organisations have the opportunity to support people in need in a targeted and earmarked manner.

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mAkib'Afya translates as 'saving for health'. And that is exactly what people living in remote regions such as South Kivu in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) ought to do . They do not have much. But when there is some money in the coffers, other expenses usually seem more important than providing for illness. The fatal thing is that if people fall ill in these areas, they have to pay the treatment costs themselves. As a result, illness can mean the economic ruin of entire families.

This is where the mAkib'Afya project came in. The partners Difäm Weltweit, mTOMADY and DOM-ECC embedded the mobile phone app for a virtual wallet into the payment service of a mobile phone provider. mTOMADY adapted its software platform, which had already proven useful in a similar project. The church DOM-ECC used its network to select and support users. Difäm Weltweit coordinated the pilot project, which was co-financed by BENGO, from planning to implementation and evaluation.

The idea is that users can put small amounts into the virtual wallet - whenever they have some money to spare. Any money in the wallet is only available for healthcare expenses - including for friends or family. One advantage of this principle: If state institutions or aid organisations want to support particularly needy people, they can do so via the virtual wallet and with pinpoint accuracy.

So much for the theory. The pilot project was designed to test whether this approach would really bring about an improvement for the people. To do this, the project partners brought a telecommunications company on board, which covers the entire DR Congo . Over 1,000 people took part in the pilot project and used the system. An initial evaluation shows that people with a low income in particular greatly appreciate this savings opportunity. The tool mAkib'Afya therefore facilitates access to healthcare for particularly vulnerable population groups. Unfortunately, the renewed escalation of the civil war in the DR Congo at the beginning of 2025 has halted further development of the project for the time being. However, the technology and the findings can be transferred to other countries and applied again in the Congo, as soon as the conditions allow.

IN BRIEF

- **Country: Democratic Republic of the Congo**
- **Goal: Better Health Financing**
- **Approved funds: € 143,904**

THE FIRST SWEET FRUITS ON A LONG, BITTER ROAD

Around 52,000 refugees live in the Dzaleka refugee camp in Malawi - originally the camp was planned for just 10,000 people. A further 50,000 people are living in the surrounding communities. Living conditions are harsh and the country is one of the poorest in the world. Mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and trauma are widespread. This project offers help.

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The aim of the project is to strengthen the mental health of refugees in the camp and also of residents in the surrounding villages. It is supported by the local organisation Moravian Humanitarian and Development Services (MoHDevS), coordinated by Difäm Weltweit and funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Around 1,500 people are to be reached by March 2027.

Many of those affected do not know where they can find help - or they are ashamed because mental illnesses are stigmatised in their communities . The project aims to change this: It offers medical and psychological support and at the same time works to break down prejudices. Training courses for healthcare staff, traditional healers and volunteers ensure that mental illness can be recognised and treated more quickly.

A centrepiece of the project is education. Topics such as depression, addiction or suicide prevention are publicised via the camp radio station, theatre plays or via the social media group 'Dzaleka-Rising' . The aim is to create an open environment, in which mental health can be discussed - without shame or fear. Practical support is also offered: In self-help groups, sufferers and relatives can exchange ideas, share experiences and find ways out of the crisis together. The groups are organised according to age, gender or problem - so they can provide targeted support with a low inhibition threshold.

Initially, psychologists led the sessions, but now trained health workers also take over. The long-term goal: a stable, independent support network that can continue without outside help.

The results so far are encouraging: 315 people have already been accepted into groups. Many of them report that they have been able to find new hope - some even say that the project has saved their lives. Healthcare staff also feel better prepared and more confident in dealing with mental illness thanks to the training courses. But the need is great - many more people are waiting for support. That is why the project is being expanded: More groups, more training courses, new concepts such as so-called 'expert clients', former participants who accompany and educate others. The result is a strong community in which no one has to be left alone with their problems.

IN BRIEF

- **Country: Malawi**
- **Goal: Psychological support for refugees**
- **Approved funds: € 225,265**

HOPE IN TIMES OF CRISIS
HIV SUPPORT IN BUKAVU

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Amidst violence and instability in South Kivu, in the east of the Democratic Republic (DR) of Congo, one project persevered until 2024: it supported people living with HIV and fought against the spread of the virus. It relied on a combination of education, testing, medical therapy and psychosocial care.

More than half a million people in the Democratic Republic of Congo are living with HIV – many without a diagnosis or access to vital therapies. On top of that, they face stigma and a lack of knowledge about how the virus is transmitted. Difäm Weltweit and Centre Olame – the local project partner – are therefore taking a holistic approach combining education, medical care and psychosocial support. The aim is not only to cure, but also to build resilience – especially among women, who are often affected themselves, but also bear the burden as mothers or carers for relatives.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT COMPONENTS:

- Prevention: Training courses, radio programmes and events are used to educate the population about HIV. The focus is on young people and women.
- Treatment: Infected people receive free tests, access to antiretroviral therapy and medical follow-up care.
- Psychosocial support: Discussion groups, individual counselling and conflict mediation help people to cope with the disease and its social consequences.
- Prevention of mother-to-child transmission: Pregnant women receive medication and care to protect their babies from infection.
- Home visits: Staff provide on-site assistance, strengthen family structures and ensure adherence to therapy.
- Education & vocational training: Children and young people living with HIV are supported – e.g. through sewing courses to secure their income.
- Savings groups: People living with HIV can use the money they save to build a livelihood.

IN BRIEF

- **Country: Democratic Republic of Congo**
- **Goal: HIV prevention and treatment**
- **Funds approved: €31,476**

SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

Despite the situation remaining difficult in 2024, there were noticeable successes: more and more people were getting tested and treated. 75 women regularly participated in self-help groups, and 50 young people were trained in tailoring. Much was also achieved in the medical field: twelve midwives were trained in the prevention of mother-to-child transmission. The project impressively demonstrated how local commitment, medical aid and human care can change the lives of many people – leading to better health, dignity and hope. At the beginning of 2025, the situation in South Kivu escalated. After fierce fighting, the major cities of Goma and Bukavu were taken by the M23 rebel group. This report refers to the course of the project in 2024, when structured work was still possible. At the moment, we do not know how the people affected are doing. The project is directly endangered by the war and is also immediately affected by the reduction in US support for the treatment of HIV. This valuable work is therefore threatened in two ways.

HEALTHCARE NEEDS SKILLED WORKERS

Many African countries have a dramatic shortage of medical personnel – a serious obstacle to effective healthcare provision. One key reason for this is a lack of training places. This is exactly where Difäm Weltweit comes in. For years, the organisation has been committed to improving educational opportunities and building medical infrastructure – an investment that not only saves lives but also strengthens society as a whole.

MORE MIDWIVES FOR CHAD:

A glance at the figures reveals the extent of the shortage of skilled workers: In Germany, one doctor is responsible for around 222 people. In Chad, the figure is 20,000. As a result, many births take place without medical care – and without appropriate assistance in the event of complications. In 2024, one focus was on training midwives in Ndjamena, Chad. Eight dedicated students received scholarships and are now preparing for their work in local hospitals – in a region with an alarming maternal mortality rate: 1,063 deaths per 100,000 births. By comparison, the maximum rate in Germany is seven. Workshops and training courses provide support for the transition from education to work – while also strengthening local health centres.

LEARN ABOUT NURSING IN NEBOBONGO:

Training for skilled personnel is also progressing in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): 134 students are currently studying at the nursing school run by our partner organisation CECCA 16 in Nebobongo. Difäm Weltweit supports the students with scholarships. The boarding school focuses on modern methods and practical, competence-based learning. Theory meets practice – with positive effects for the training and the care of patients.

FISTULA SURGERY IN EASTERN CONGO:

In Bunia, DR Congo, Difäm provides global assistance to women with vaginal fistulas – a condition that is often taboo and results from violence or complications during childbirth. Dr. Claude masters the complicated surgical technique and treats women at Rwankole Hospital. Now he is passing on his knowledge and, with Difäm's support, has trained two other doctors. The goal: local, professional care for as many women as possible.

FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR GUINEA:

Diécké, in remote south-eastern Guinea: women have little access to gynaecological care. That is set to change: a new women's clinic will be built there in 2025. Dr. Pepe Bimou, who is training to become a gynaecologist with the support of Difäm Weltweit, is ready to go. His wish is to return as soon as possible and apply his knowledge for the benefit of women in his home country.

WHAT REMAINS?

Whether midwives in Chad, nursing students in the DR Congo, fistula surgeons in Rwankole or aspiring gynaecologists in Guinea – Difäm Weltweit invests in people who change lives. This work will continue in 2025. Because health begins with education – and with hope for a better future.

IN BRIEF

- **Country: Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Chad**
- **Goal: Investment in education**

WELL OF LIFE AND SPARK OF HOPE

What began as the treatment of a painful infection developed into a holistic transformation for an entire region: in 2024, a project was launched in a small parish in Kenya that had a greater impact than expected.

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It all started with so-called jiggers – parasites that bury themselves in the skin and cause inflammation and severe pain, especially in children. Many of those affected suffered in silence, often hiding in shame. The first volunteers were trained to help precisely these people. They treated infected individuals in schools and villages, educated them about hygiene and gave them not only relief, but also a piece of their dignity back. The change was noticeable – children returned to class healthy and confident. But that was only the beginning. It quickly became clear that hygiene requires water – clean water. So the project was expanded. Eight communities jointly determined the best locations for new water sources. The plan was ambitious: 14 sources. The budget initially allowed for seven – but these seven exceeded all expectations. The villagers lent a hand: they carried building materials, helped with the construction and thus ensured that the sources actually became community projects. Four local craftsmen carried out the construction work – and immediately passed on their knowledge. They also showed how to make latrine slabs – a simple but effective measure for better hygiene. After construction, trained volunteers took over the maintenance of the springs. They checked their cleanliness and functionality over a period of six months – and were motivated to do so with a small wage. At the end of this phase, responsibility for each well was handed over to the community.

With the focus on hygiene, another issue soon came to the fore: many girls were unable to attend school during their periods because they lacked menstrual products. Instead of relying on expensive disposable pads, the idea of locally producing reusable pads was developed. The first funds were raised and a small production facility was set up. The goal: to promote hygiene, ensure education – and create jobs for young women. One of these women became the symbol of the project: she learned how to make liquid soap, started her own small business and supplied her community with much-needed products – in an area where the nearest shop is often several kilometres away. Her success story inspired many others. The project officially ended in December 2024. But its legacy lives on: clean water, better health awareness, new perspectives – and the feeling that together we can make a difference. The fight against a parasite gave rise to a movement that has changed lives – and will continue to have an impact for a long time to come.

IN BRIEF

- Country: Kenya
- Goal: Improvement of hygienic conditions and treatment of jiggers
- Funds approved: € 11,000

STRENGTHEN SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

For several years now, Difäm Weltweit and the Guinean organisation TINKISSO, supported by Bread for the World, have been campaigning for something that should actually be a matter of course: safe pregnancies, healthy births and good medical care. In the remote region of N'zérékoré in south-eastern Guinea, however, there is still a long way to go. But the campaign is bearing fruit.

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What began as a health project for women and children has evolved since 2021 into a strong commitment to sexual and reproductive health. Many women are still forced to deliver their babies with traditional midwives in the village due to a lack of infrastructure. When complications arise, the necessary medical expertise is lacking. Even when prenatal care is available, it is rarely used. Immediately after giving birth, the women usually return to their villages – there is then hardly any information available about their health and that of their newborns.

Another danger for women and their unborn children: N'zérékoré is located in the border region between Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast and is therefore heavily affected by HIV. Women in particular are at high risk of becoming infected with HIV and then passing the infection on to their unborn children. The project had set itself the goal of increasing the number of women giving birth in church-run health facilities by 15 per cent compared to previous levels. The target was exceeded, with an increase of over 17 per cent. Nevertheless, there are still too many deaths among mothers and newborns. In this context, another figure gives cause for hope: the proportion of women who attended four prenatal appointments during their pregnancy has more than tripled. In the fight against HIV, more than 4,000 women and young people were persuaded to get tested.

The ASSET approach of Difäm Weltweit has contributed significantly to the sustainable success of the project. In this approach, village moderators initiate discussions on how sexual and reproductive health can be improved in the community: Which issues are important? What should be addressed first? How can each individual contribute to implementation? This strengthens acceptance of and identification with the project's measures. At the same time, the project creates better conditions by equipping health posts and training health personnel. The activities initiated to promote mother and child health are being continued and expanded by Difäm Weltweit and its partners.

A new focus is on following up with women who have recently given birth in their village homes. The project is also expanding geographically: health posts in five additional communities are being renovated and equipped with solar panels for electric lighting and medical equipment. This means that almost all villages in the sub-prefectures of Diécké, Bignamou, Bowé and Laine are now included.

IN BRIEF

- **Country: Guinea**
- **Objective: Strengthen sexual and reproductive health**
- **Funds approved: € 31,830 (2024)**

INCLUSION THAT COMES FROM THE HEART

Something special is happening in the north-east of the Democratic Republic of Congo: in the middle of a region where people with disabilities often live on the margins of society, a door is opening – to education, participation and a future. Supported by Difäm Weltweit, the CERBC school offers children and young people with deafness or other disabilities exactly what they are often denied: opportunities.

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A mere 20 percent of children with disabilities in the regions of Aru, Mahagi, Haut-Uélé and Bas- Uélé in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo attend primary school. Only a few of them make it to vocational training. The CERBC boarding school wants to change this – with the support of Difäm Weltweit, which covers the school and boarding costs for 50 children. In addition, there are training courses for teachers and education on reproductive health for young people – important in a region where such topics are often still taboo.

The CERBC education centre was founded in 2004 by audiologist Dr Ismael Kusemererwa Byaruhangakus with a clear vision: no one should be left behind. In line with the UN's 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, CERBC fights against poverty, discrimination and social exclusion. And with success.

The current project by Difäm Weltweit runs from August 2023 to July 2025 and supports 50 young people: 20 primary school pupils, 10 secondary school pupils and 20 trainees – many of whom are learning the tailoring trade. Because education alone is not enough – prospects are needed. Vocational qualifications should help them to become economically independent and socially integrated.

Teachers are also supported. They receive further training, learn special education methods and are trained in sign language and Braille. Similarly, 240 parents are trained in sign language to improve communication with their children. This creates a learning environment in which children with special needs are seen, heard and supported.

In addition to regular school lessons, education is a key issue: 120 deaf young people and women receive training on sexual and reproductive health – a taboo subject that can be vital in view of high HIV rates and too many teenage pregnancies.

The project is also backed by a long-standing partnership with the Ziegler Foundation, which provides generous support for the initiative. What is happening here is more than just educational support: it is a courageous step towards inclusion, equality and hope – driven by commitment, heart and the conviction that every child counts. A parents' association with 33 members is also committed to promoting the rights of people with disabilities. The association is helping to change the way society thinks – away from pity and towards respect and recognition.

IN BRIEF

- **Country: Democratic Republic of Congo**
- **Objective: Improving education to integrate children with disabilities**
- **Funds approved: € 43,397**

WITH QUALITY TO BETTER CARE

Guinea's healthcare system is among the weakest in the world. More than half of the country's health facilities do not even meet basic standards. However, in the N'zérékoré region in the southeast of the country, a quiet but effective transformation is taking place – thanks in part to a project that is gradually improving the quality of care.

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The Guinean government wants to strengthen the weak healthcare system. With the support of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Guinean Ministry of Health therefore developed the Assurance Qualité (AQ) quality assurance system and the accompanying Monitorage Amélioré (MA) supervision system . The centrepiece of the approach: a mixture of self-evaluation and external monitoring by health authorities. Difäm Weltweit has converted the materials for this quality management system into blended learning courses with video tutorials. Together with the Guinean partner organisation TINKISSO, Difäm Weltweit implemented these courses as part of a two-year project in four church hospitals: the Catholic hospitals Notre Dame de la Vie in Bowé and St. Abraham in Gouécké, the Methodist clinic in Diécké and the N'zao mission hospital. The project was generously co-financed by the diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED IN CONCRETE TERMS?

- Two quality officers were trained in each centre.
- All employees received basic training in the use of digital media.
- Blended learning with video tutorials was established and expanded - on topics such as 'Obstetrics with partogram', 'Neonatal resuscitation' and 'Infection prevention'.
- Regular supervision, auto-evaluations and external tandem inspections with the health authorities took place.
- A study on administrative practices and initial training for more efficient clinic management were carried out

The successes are obvious: the average fulfilment of the 45 quality indicators rose from 50 per cent (2023) to 81 per cent (2024). The improvement was particularly significant in Bowé (from 31 to 69 per cent) and Diécké (from 41 to 80 per cent). Even N'zao Hospital, which is considered a flagship hospital, increased - from 83 to 100 per cent. Key progress was made in the area of obstetrics: At the start of the project, no midwife was using the partogram - a simple but effective protocol for early detection of complications. Two years later it is now used accurately in 84 per cent of births , in Diécké even 100 per cent. An often underestimated area also received attention: the administration. In the course of the project, weaknesses were identified and the first steps towards digitalisation were initiated - a good start for a possible next project phase.

IN BRIEF

- Country: Guinea
- Objective: To improve the quality of care in four church hospitals
- Funds granted: € 154,328

DESTROYED GARDENS

The megacity of Goma - once a refuge for people fleeing violence and terror in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo - has itself become a war zone again at the beginning of 2025. The rebel group M23 took over the city, thousands lost their lives, camps were destroyed and people were forced to flee again. This report looks back to the time before the escalation - when people tried to make the best of a difficult situation.

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In the midst of a humanitarian tragedy with over 7 million internally displaced people, Difäm Weltweit joined forces with its partner organisation DORM ECC in an innovative emergency aid project. In the refugee camps around Goma - especially in Lushagala, Mudja and Lwashi - there was a lack of almost everything: food, clean water and medical care. But the DORM ECC team had an idea, which would literally bear fruit, at least for some of the most vulnerable families: Raised vegetable beds.

Together with people in the camps, vegetable patches were set up in which amaranth, carrots and cabbage thrived - and with them hope and a small piece of security. 66 selected households with particularly vulnerable persons were introduced to vegetable growing, with training on nutrition and hygiene rounding off the project. The success was measurable and tangible.

At the same time, a drinking water supply was set up in the Lwashi camp . As it was impossible to build a well due to the rocky volcanic soil, water was brought in by tanker from the town. Medical assistance was also provided : Malnourished children received therapeutic food. The positive effects extended beyond the physical: the refugees shared their harvest and strengthened their community spirit. The newly learnt skills were intended to create prospects. However, the escalation of violence also destroyed this piece of hope along with the gardens.

In 2024, a new threat emerged: a particularly contagious form of M-Pox. Children were particularly affected. Difäm Weltweit and its partner DORMECC reacted quickly: 80 health workers were trained. They provided information in camps such as Rusayo, Mudja and Kanyaruchinya, isolated suspected cases and implemented protective measures.

However, the rebel invasion has made it impossible to continue this project either. Camps have been destroyed and the health system now has to provide additional care for the victims of violence. What remains is hope and the certainty that help is possible if peace is given another chance.

The Morpho Foundation wanted to support the nutrition project in the long term - but this never happened. Even if the situation currently does not allow to continue, garden beds, water containers and education show that when need meets creativity, change is the result. As soon as it is possible again, Difäm Weltweit wants to continue working on this together with local partners.

IN BRIEF

- **Country: Democratic Republic of the Congo**
- **Objective: Food security and fight against M-Pox**
- **Funds approved: € 21,940**

AFTER THE CYCLONE IS BEFORE THE CYCLONE

In March 2023, Cyclone Freddy struck Malawi with full force—one of the worst tropical storms the country has ever experienced. The cyclone caused devastating damage, particularly in the districts of Blantyre, Chiradzulu, Mulanje, and Phalombe. Torrential rains led to massive flooding, sweeping away entire villages and destroying homes, fields, and vital infrastructure. Difäm Weltweit is contributing to the reconstruction efforts.

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The impact of Cyclone Freddy was staggering: over 2.26 million people were affected, and more than 659,000 lost their homes. The dire sanitary conditions led to a dramatic increase in diseases such as malaria and diarrheal illnesses. Many people lived in emergency shelters under harsh conditions—with no privacy, clean water, or medical care.

Thanks to a coordinated response by the Evangelical Lutheran Development Service (ELDS), the Blantyre District Health Office, and Difäm Weltweit, emergency measures were quickly implemented. Mobile health clinics treated the injured and the sick. Vaccination campaigns, prenatal care, and treatment of common illnesses were organized—over 1,100 people, including 145 young children, received aid. Psychosocial support was also part of the relief efforts, as many survivors suffered from severe trauma.

One year later, Difäm Weltweit, with financial support from the Stuttgart Foundation for Development and Cooperation, continues to support reconstruction. This was preceded by a study conducted by ELDS with support from Difäm Weltweit, which analyzed where the need was greatest to ensure targeted and prioritized aid. The challenges remain immense: many wells were destroyed, and access to clean drinking water remains critical. Food insecurity is also a major concern—88 percent of households lacked sufficient food after the storm. Emergency food aid was only a first step—long-term support programs for agriculture, seed distribution, and training for alternative sources of income are now underway.

Another pressing issue: 63 percent of families lost their homes, and many still live in makeshift shelters. Building materials and financial resources are scarce. Initial initiatives are underway to provide construction materials and technical support, but it will take time. Schools were also destroyed, and many children were out of school for months. Rebuilding educational facilities and targeted support are now helping to restore access to education.

Reconstruction is not just about bricks and water pipes. It's also about long-term stability—both in housing and in the psychological, economic, and social resilience of the people. Because one thing is certain: the next cyclone will come—and Malawi must be prepared.

KURZ & BÜNDIG

- **Country: Malawi**
- **Objective: Water supply and new perspectives for cyclone victims**
- **Funds approved: € 5,005**

SAFE MEDICINES, TRAINED PERSONNEL

In 2024, the Pharmaceutical Development Cooperation unit of Difäm Weltweit continued its work in 15 countries. A key focus was the expansion of church-run central pharmacies in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea. Meanwhile, the Minilab network uncovered numerous counterfeit and substandard medicines. A particular highlight of the year was the Ecumenical Pharmaceutical Network (EPN) forum held in Tanzania.

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LIBERIA: PROGRESS IN MEDICINE SUPPLY

In Liberia, cooperation with the Christian Health Association of Liberia (CHAL) was intensified. The two storage facilities of the church central pharmacy in Monrovia and Gbarnga were modernized. Special emphasis was placed on improving the use of newly installed inventory management software and on quality control using the Minilab. A technician was funded to regularly collect and analyze medicine samples. In addition, solar systems were installed at the headquarters and warehouse in Monrovia to make the power supply more sustainable and secure.

SIERRA LEONE: ESTABLISHMENT OF A CENTRAL PHARMACY

In Sierra Leone, Difäm Weltweit supported the establishment of the church-run central pharmacy of the Christian Health Association of Sierra Leone (CHASL), as well as the improvement of pharmaceutical standards in CHASL's health facilities. A training course for pharmaceutical staff was conducted with 49 participants from 45 facilities. The participants significantly enhanced their knowledge of procurement planning and stock control. Supervision visits revealed progress in documentation and medicine availability.

GUINEA: PILOT PHASE OF CENTRALIZED PROCUREMENT

In Guinea, the establishment of a centralized pharmaceutical procurement system through the church umbrella organization RECOSAC was advanced. A pilot phase began with the supply of five healthcare facilities. Deliveries by the appointed wholesaler and payment processes were closely monitored to ensure sustainability. Pharmaceutical supervision in 15 RECOSAC facilities showed improvements in stock management. Overall, the availability of medicines remained a challenge, highlighting the importance of centralized procurement.

IMPORTANT TRAININGS

Many church-run healthcare facilities in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone lack trained pharmaceutical personnel—especially in rural areas. Often, pharmacy tasks are handled by semi-skilled workers who frequently lack the necessary expertise in storage, demand forecasting, and the safe use of medicines. This makes the regular, practice-oriented basic trainings and supervisions conducted by the partners especially important. These will also continue in the coming year.

TANZANIA: CYTOSTATICS SUPPLY AND FURTHER TRAINING

In Tanzania, the supply of quality-assured cytostatics was supported at the Cancer Care Center of the Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Center (KCMC) in Moshi. A newly developed certificate course in "Oncology Pharmacy" was offered to pharmacists from ten cancer care centers—some of which were recently established—for professional training. Until now, such a specialization opportunity had not existed in Tanzania. As the number of cancer care centers in the country has fortunately grown rapidly, this training offer was urgently needed.

The training included modules on aseptic techniques and the safe handling of cytostatics, with a strong emphasis on practical application. Difäm also facilitated a delivery of protective equipment for this purpose. Additionally, a networking meeting of all oncology pharmacists in Tanzania was held in Dar es Salaam, during which 16 standard operating procedures (SOPs) were developed and revised. These SOPs are now being used uniformly across all centers.

EPN-FORUM 2024: EXCHANGE AND COLLABORATION

At the end of October 2024, the largest-ever forum of the Ecumenical Pharmaceutical Network (EPN) took place in Dar es Salaam, bringing together over 200 participants from 25 countries. Key topics included the local production of high-quality medicines, the establishment of reliable supply chains, and sustainable financing. A new advocacy strategy developed through a participatory process was presented.
Christine Häfele-Abah, Difäm's Pharmaceutical Development Cooperation Advisor, served on the EPN Board for six years, including the last three years as chairperson. Her term of office ended in accordance with the bylaws after two terms, and she was warmly thanked and bid farewell by EPN and its members. The chairmanship was passed on to pharmacist Stephen Kigera from Kenya, who had already served on the EPN Board for the past three years. The technical collaboration between Difäm and EPN will continue and is embedded in our strategic framework through 2027.

MINILAB-NETWORK: QUALITY ASSURANCE OF MEDICINES

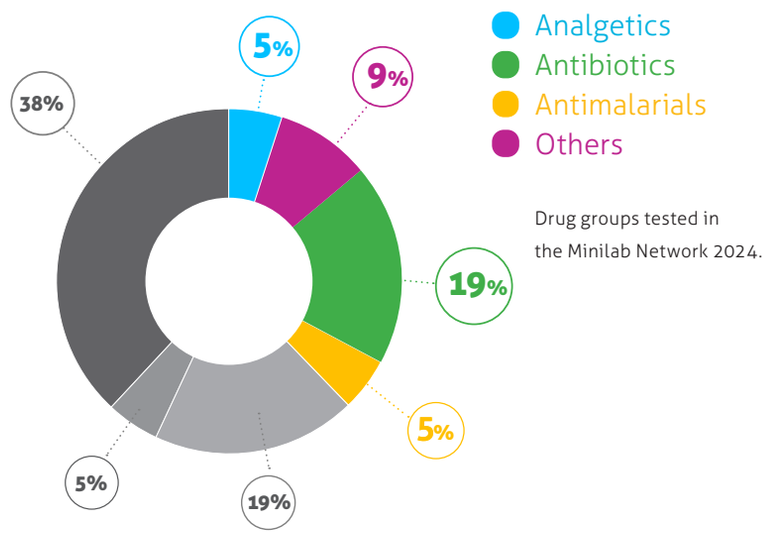
The Minilab Network is an initiative aimed at detecting and removing counterfeit and substandard medicines from circulation. Using a portable suitcase laboratory, trained staff can screen over 100 medicines for their active ingredients and forward suspicious samples to a professional lab for further analysis.
By the end of 2024, the network included 17 African partner organizations in 13 countries. A total of 1,757 analyses had been conducted, with antibiotics being the most frequently tested drug category. Several cases of falsification were uncovered and reported to the WHO. A two-day Minilab training was held in Dar es Salaam ahead of the EPN Forum, focusing on particularly complex cases.

UKRAINE EMERGENCY AID: CONTINUED SUPPORT

Emergency aid for Ukraine was continued in 2024. A total of four shipments of purchased products worth over €50,000 were sent. These deliveries went to a children's hospital in Rivne, to hospitals near the front line supported by the Charitable Foundation "Invictus–Syla Neskorenyh" in Kyiv, and to a hospital in Krements.

CONCLUSION

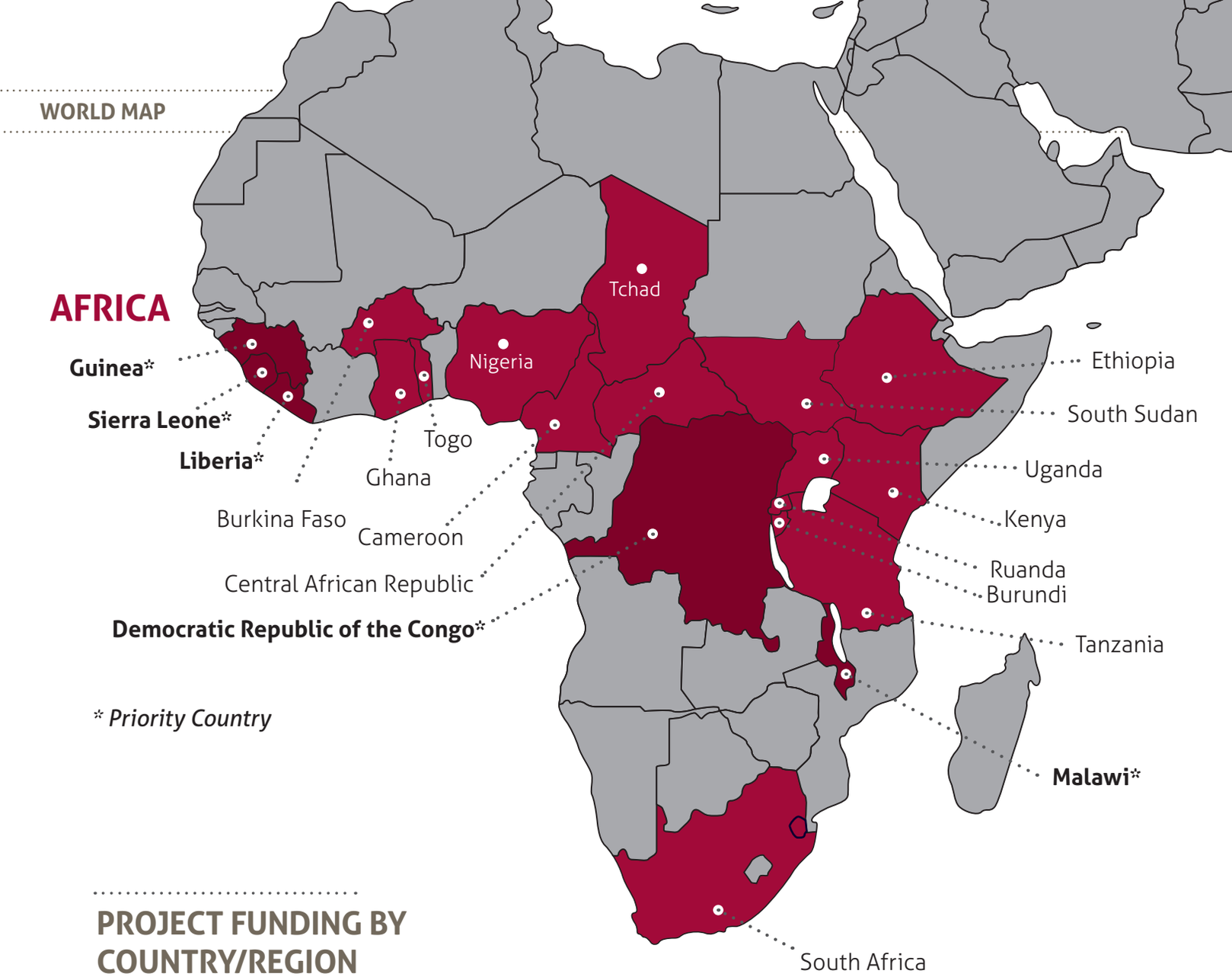
The pharmaceutical work of Difäm Weltweit leverages the church-based network of Difäm Weltweit to collaborate strategically with local partners. The combination of infrastructure development, training, and quality control contributes to strengthening medicine supply systems in many African countries on a sustainable basis.



Drug groups tested in the Minilab Network 2024.

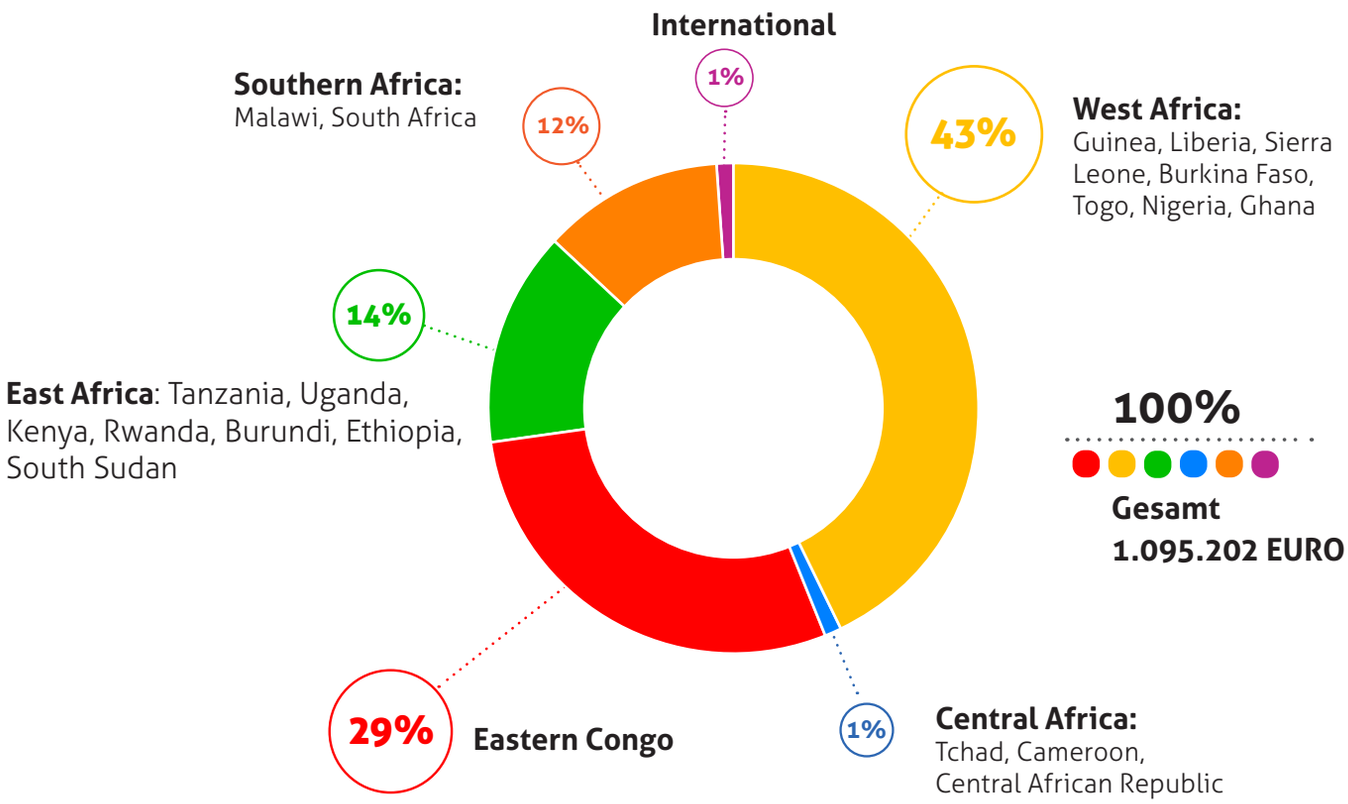
WORLD MAP

AFRICA

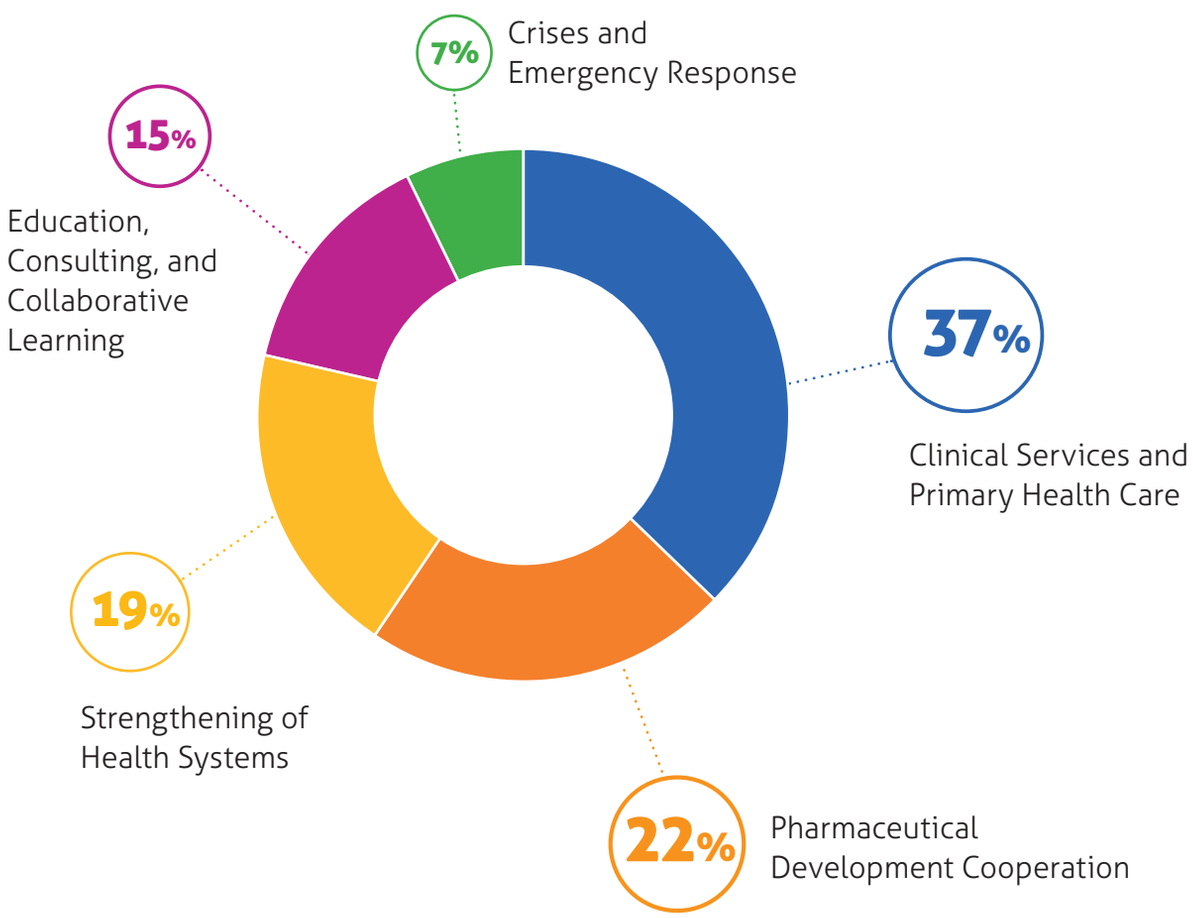


* *Priority Country*

PROJECT FUNDING BY COUNTRY/REGION



PROJECT FUNDING BY STRATEGIC GOALS



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Gesundheit in der Einen Welt

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