

# Service for peace and development

EIRENE – giving service, where misery and conflict prevail

EIRENE



EIRENE professional **Christoph van Edig** (right) and the German ambassador, **Heike Thiele**, talking with partners in Niger, one of the countries in which EIRENE runs projects, in 2005.

deploying personnel in international cooperation projects. At the same time EIRENE's partner organisations in Morocco were appealing to EIRENE to send professionals who would serve for several years (more than just two or three) in vocational training programmes. It was in this context, that EIRENE gained recognition as a development service agency in 1971.

## ACTIVE SOLIDARITY THROUGH LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

In 1980 EIRENE began a new recruitment programme: Active Solidarity Through Learning and Professional Service (Solidarischer Lern- und Fachdienst, SLFD). The creation of SLFD was prompted by requests from individual grassroots initiatives in the Global South who wanted to develop contacts and build relationships with groups in the Global North.

EIRENE therefore set out to establish a programme with a new emphasis: The SLFD went against the trend towards increasing professionalisation of development workers and instead emphasised solidarity between grassroots initiatives in the South and in the North. SLFD professionals worked side by side with local professionals to promote human rights in conflict situations, such as El Salvador. The SLFD later helped to give birth to the Civil Peace Service

## ANTI-RACIST APPROACH

In 2015 EIRENE began a process of anti-racist organisational development. This process includes further development of our anti-discriminatory human resources policy. One of the key aspects of this policy is a reorientation towards recruiting professionals who have experienced racism themselves and have become skilled at taking action to combat discrimination.

At the same time we are also changing our structures and procedures. The procedure for the selection of professionals now entails equal cooperation between EIRENE and our partner organisations. Sometimes one side, and sometimes the other, is directly involved in any given situation. This means that representatives of our partner organisations are fully involved from start to finish in shaping the processes for reaching consensus.

EIRENE's original vision of peace service states the following aim: "We want to offer young men with a Christian pacifist commitment the opportunity to undertake voluntary service in places where there is great misery and in conflict situations where they can contribute to reconciliation". In response to the devastation of two world wars and drawing on the experience of nonviolence gained by the historic peace churches, EIRENE was founded in Chicago in 1957, at the instigation of the World Council of Churches.

In that same year, the first men with work experience travelled to the Moroccan-Algerian border – at a time when the colonial power, France, was fighting a war there. A Dutchman went to work together with a Frenchman, who was making a bold statement by serving in that particular place. The two men lived together with Algerian refugees and supported them in their struggle to secure the basic necessities of life. They were soon joined by the first women in EIRENE's peace service. One of EIRENE's fundamental convictions is that peace and justice can only flourish jointly. At the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, EIRENE was also active in other African countries, including Cameroon, Chad, and Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). To start, funding came exclusively from the professionals' own circles of supporters and from the project funds of North American and European churches. In the 1960s, EIRENE moved its office to Germany, at a time when the process of development was deemed to be of great importance. This opened up the possibility of applying for grants from the BMZ (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) to cover the costs of

*To date, 697 professionals have undertaken service for peace and development with EIRENE.*

*EIRENE professionals are currently working in Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, DRC, Mali, Morocco, Nicaragua, and Niger.*

**Thorsten Klein,**  
EIRENE, public  
relations secretary

# Contributing to change

## First as a professional aid worker, then as EIRENE's regional coordinator for the Sahel

I already decided as a teenager that I wanted to work in development cooperation when I was older, so I chose to study agriculture and eventually specialised in agricultural economics and organic farming.

In 2000 – when I had completed my studies – the DED gave me the opportunity to work as an agricultural advisor in Djibo in the north-east of Burkina Faso. As well as working on monitoring and evaluation for the „Projet économie familiale (PEF)“, I also supported an ecological agriculture project. It was a two year contract, but I had to move to a new place of work partway through when the first project was completed.

So I moved to the capital city, Ouagadougou. At first I supported a project “promoting local initiatives“, which was based in the DED country office, and then I worked as an advisor to the ASDC, a farmers' organisation in the Méguet region, west of Ouagadougou. My stay in Burkina Faso finally ended in May 2004 and I returned to Germany with my family.

### RETURNING FOR THE FIRST TIME

At first, I had much the same experience as many other people who have worked in development service: My experience and skills were not really appreciated and they were not even properly understood. And this was not only in the human resources departments of corporations. Even at the job centre I was told: “You've obviously had a great adventure! What can we do for you now?” Evaluations, such as the DEval study, show how useful and important development service is as an instrument of German development cooperation. But unfortunately a lot of people in Germany – including many employers – know far too little about the background of our work in development service. Nevertheless, I did not allow myself to be discouraged by the comments of the job centre staff or any others. After about 18 months I found a temporary job at the Bremen Fibre Institute. I worked there for more than three years – on a project which was concerned with the qualitative analysis of cotton fibres for commercial purposes, with a particular focus on African cotton exporting countries.

When the contract came to an end, I started applying for jobs again. I successfully applied for a job at EIRENE and was given a two-year contract to work in eastern Congo. During this time I discovered the significance of nonviolent conflict transformation and its potential for helping to bring about positive and lasting social change.

### RETURNING A SECOND TIME

In 2013 I went back to my family in Germany. I tried to improve my career prospects by completing a six-month



training course which would enable me to become a project manager for renewable energy. This venture was not crowned with success, though. Due to a change in the funding of renewable energy in Germany, there were suddenly very few jobs in the sector. Companies almost stopped taking on new employees altogether. Instead, jobs were often being cut.

Then I came across an advert for another job with EIRENE – this time as a regional coordinator. My application was successful. So in February 2016, I took over the post of Desk Officer for Sahel, based at EIRENE's head office; in 2017 my area of responsibility was extended to include Morocco.

My current job feels to me like a perfect combination of working for development and peacebuilding. What I like especially is that we are not just operating in a world of theory – our work actually helps to bring about real change.

**Daniel Djedouboum**  
(2nd from right) – on an advisory visit to a cooperative in eastern Congo

**Daniel Djedouboum**  
2000 - 2004:  
Burkina Faso, DED  
2011 - 2013:  
DR Congo, EIRENE