

A prospect for the South Caucasus: income opportunities and addressing conflict

Context

The South Caucasus is strongly influenced by its post-Soviet past. Poverty and hopelessness are especially acute in rural areas. People are migrating to the cities or abroad, thereby creating considerable dependence on money remittances from migrant workers. In addition, South Caucasus countries witness the conflict of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia and around Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan-Armenia). Transforming the conflict is being rendered difficult by its instrumentalization for domestic political purposes, entrenched opinions, and rampant nationalism. The upshot is very little visible progress. In addition to armed conflicts, the South Caucasus is also regularly affected by natural disasters such as earthquakes, flooding, and drought. On the one hand, economic development is very unevenly distributed and on the other, it is limited mainly to urban areas. The HEKS/EPER program in the South Caucasus therefore focuses on rural areas.

Objectives, priorities, activities

The regional program aims to improve the life prospects of the people of the South Caucasus. The intention is to empower beneficiaries to meet daily economic challenges on their own, among other things, by promoting inclusive market systems, vocational training, access to financial services and boosting agricultural productivity.

Young people, media workers, opinion leaders and civil society should question the dominant stereotypes, disseminate information from alternative sources or with alternative content and jointly develop a vision of peace for society.



SOUTH CAUCASUS

HEKS/EPER Main Focus:
Development of Rural Communities



Georgia **3'970'907**

Armenia **2'976'439**

Population (2022)

Georgia **69'700**

Armenia **29'740**

Area km²



To that end, young people and opinion leaders are mobilized for conflict transformation, development, and dissemination of alternative information. Youth and opinion leaders from South Caucasus countries and conflicting regions are facilitated and encouraged to interact, establish various communication platforms, and cooperate.

Target groups

The program's beneficiaries are, on the one hand, residents of rural parts of the South Caucasus – especially peasant families – and on the other, people affected directly or indirectly by the conflicts. In operational terms, HEKS/EPER works primarily with market players including small producers, private sector players, young people, opinion leaders, media professionals and civil society organizations.

Partnerships, networks, alliances, memberships

HEKS/EPER cooperates with 13 local partner organizations in the South Caucasus (NGOs, farmers' associations, small businesses) and is active in national and inter-national networks. In the present program phase, efforts are to be redoubled to build up and utilize strategic partnerships.

HEKS/EPER on the ground

7 professionals work on permanent bases at HEKS/EPER South Caucasus office, while rest of the employees are involved in various mandated projects.

Topics and working approach

The HEKS/EPER program for the South Caucasus analyses interventions from a systemic perspective and aims for systemic change. In its activities HEKS/EPER functions as a moderator rather than a service provider and cooperates with all relevant players. The program promotes sustainable agricultural production to ensure that at a minimum, production is integrated. Moreover, HEKS/EPER endeavors to strengthen civil society through voluntary engagement and not just through professional service providers. HEKS/EPER takes a conflict-sensitive approach to project planning and implementation.

Region:

South Caucasus: Armenia, Georgia

HEKS/EPER No.: 390.007

Responsibility:

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