



IMPLEMENTATION CONCEPT

Development of rural communities (DevRC)

Content

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Context and framework	4
3.	HEKS-EPER positioning: development of rural communities	8
3.1.	DevRC positioning in HEKS-EPER's strategy and working experiences	8
3.2.	HEKS-EPER's definition of DevRC: who and where	9
3.3.	DevRC: general objectives, principles and working approaches	11
4.	DevRC: fields of intervention and implementation priorities	14
4.1.	Access to and defence of resources	15
4.2.	Sustainable production and food security	18
4.3.	Value creation and access to markets	20

Impressum

Text: HEKS International Division, Lead: Rural Development Advisor

Photo editor: Ruedi Lüscher

Design: Toni Bernet

April 2011



1. Introduction

Why an implementation concept?

Development of rural communities (DevRC) is defined in the HEKS-EPER's strategy, 2008–2012, as the second main priority theme of the HEKS-EPER's development cooperation activities, after the first, peace promotion and conflict transformation (PCT). DevRC and PCT, together with humanitarian aid (HA) and inter-church aid (KiZA), are the pillars of the development cooperation work of the International Division. The objective of this document is to clarify the priority theme DevRC and illustrate:

- the coherence between the vision and mission of HEKS-EPER and its work in the field of DevRC,
- the work carried out so far by HEKS-EPER in the sector of food security and rural development,
- the orientation and frame of reference for staff in relation to the definition of objectives, positions, and priority work areas and principles.

This document serves as a binding framework for programme activities in this area for HEKS-EPER employees at home and abroad as well as outsiders and will be revised according to the further development of HEKS-EPER's overall strategy.



2. Context and framework

As a church-based development agency that supports projects on four continents, HEKS-EPER has an obligation to observe constantly both the overall international context of the field of development cooperation (DC), and accompanying relevant discussions and analysis. The aspects summarised below highlight some important elements of DC's actual context and framework; the intention of the summary is to embed and allow a better understanding of HEKS-EPER's implementation strategy regarding DevRC, as outlined in the chapters that follow.

At the World Food Summit of 1996 in Rome, the heads of state present formally pledged to halve by 2015 the number of people suffering from hunger. This goal was a Millennium Development Goal (MDG) included in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. Today, 15 years after the summit and 5 years before the expiry of the 2015 period, the reality is disillusioning. Never have so many people suffered from hunger, even though farmers around the world are producing more food per capita than ever before.¹ According to estimates made by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), more than a billion people around the world suffer

1 In terms of calories, today's farmers harvest about one-third more than the amount necessary for the adequate supply of the world's population. In the past 40 years, the world's population has doubled to about 6.6 billion, while agricultural production has increased about 2.5 times. A growing proportion of this production is, however, not used in the human diet, but as animal feed and fuel.

from hunger; another two billion are malnourished, a proportion of them due to a lack of food, a proportion due to an excess of food.

Poverty in rural areas

For about 2.5 billion of the 5.5 billion inhabitants of developing countries, agriculture is the main activity and means of existence – and thus also the largest employment sector in the world. But on the other hand, about 75 per cent of the people who live in absolute poverty, and almost 80 per cent of the people who suffer from hunger, live outside cities and towns. These statistics clearly reveal the relevance of the promotion of sustainable development concepts for rural areas.²

People suffering from hunger in rural areas include small-scale and subsistence farmers as well as landless agricultural workers and their families.

Of the nearly one billion people who are suffering from extreme poverty, 70 per cent are women. About one billion people lack access to safe drinking water. These percentages and numbers continue to rise. Victims of acute drought and other natural disasters, war and civil war, whose misery is illustrated in the media in images of people suffering of hunger, are a minority of those affected. The silent majority of the hungry have too little food on a permanent basis to lead a normal life.³

The areas cultivated by them are too small and their farming methods are often too rudimentary to meet their own needs, let alone allow the production of significant surpluses. Traditional rural populations have increasingly been victims of poverty spirals. Pastoralist communities provide clear examples: all over the world, these communities encounter huge challenges to save their historical pastoral grazing grounds. Generally, they have little political clout and influence, because they live in remote areas, usually widely dispersed. The land reform and cooperative training necessary for an increase of earnings and incomes are still rare. Additional obstacles to poverty alleviation are protective agricultural policies of economically powerful nations and ineffective or missing agricultural policies by southern countries' governments.

2 As small-scale and subsistence farmers, pastoralists, fishermen, gatherers, and landless rural workers, the hungry who live in rural areas are directly dependent on the use of local land, but they cannot sustainably and securely live off the land. In most countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, hunger and poverty are issues of regional self-sufficiency. Hunger is primarily a rural problem and can only be sustainably overcome locally (translated from the German: Quelle: Wege aus der Hungerkrise, 2009, S. 3).

3 Between 1970 and 2007, in most countries the proportion of undernourished in the population declined, initially fast, and then more slowly. Since the mid-1990s, the absolute number of the undernourished has been rising again, after the price explosion on the world agricultural market in 2007/2008, as well as their percentage of the world population. Today almost one in six people suffers from hunger (Quelle: Wege aus der Hungerkrise, 2009, S. 3).

Furthermore, the growth trend in intellectual property rights (IPR) systems – for example IPR on seeds and varieties – shows a tendency to increase control of knowledge and related technologies.

The development concepts generally prioritised in southern countries are geared exclusively to the promotion of agro-industrial production models, based on monocultures and export of agricultural products – the goal that usually prevails in the northern countries too. This promotes concentration of land ownership in few hands – land grabbing – and also increases the pressure on scarce water resources. Conflicts over land and water are the result. The increasing tendency of large-scale cultivation of crops for biofuels production makes serious competition over land for food production almost unavoidable.

Violation of human rights and missing political will

Regarding respect for human rights (including the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR) central to achieving the MDG targets) continuing discrimination is observed – particularly against women and girls, indigenous peoples and minority groups. They are still often excluded from existing education systems on grounds of discrimination in the socio-cultural context and increased workload.

Poor and marginalised people are often denied access to information and the opportunity to organise and effectively contribute to policy making. Governments fail to protect them against threats to their lives and livelihoods, and pay little attention to accountability for implementing rights obligations. All this has undermined efforts to achieve faster progress towards meeting the MDGs.

Weak national and regional governments in many of the most highly affected countries often have priorities other than the fight against the hunger of their own populations. Civil society lacks the awareness, degree of organisation and public voice to claim their genuine interest.

Improved access to resources such as land, water, credit and education for the poor is regarded as a prerequisite for development, but the way to achieve such access unfortunately often relies on market forces alone. Access to clean drinking water and recycled water is as inequitably distributed as access to food and land. Rights-based claims, for example related to the «right to adequate food», are seldom considered. Small farmers, whose production potential is considered insufficient or who do not own their land, have no prospects in these models. Consequently, an increasing exodus from rural areas results in more and more hunger in the slums and suburbs of the mega-cities.

Impact of AIDS

More than 20 years and 25 million deaths after AIDS was first diagnosed in 1981, more than 33.2 million people are living with HIV (UNAIDS 2007). An overwhelming 95 percent of these

people live in developing countries. And within those countries, AIDS is becoming a greater threat in rural areas than in cities. In absolute numbers, more people living with HIV reside in rural areas. The epidemic is spreading with alarming speed into the remotest villages, cutting food production, threatening the livelihoods of rural communities and reducing their labour force, because it affects first and foremost the active population. Despite these figures, a number of national leaders persist in refusing to admit the impact of HIV/AIDS on their people and their society.

Climate change

In many parts of the world the negative impacts of climate change are already being observed. For example, the World Agriculture Report states that water shortages and temporary availability of water for agricultural production will increase in the future. Extreme climate events such as floods and droughts are expected to occur more frequently and in more serious form. Experts at the FAO forecast that increases in temperature and changes in rain patterns will result in new and more destructive pests and diseases. Rises in sea water level will increase the salinity in many agricultural regions. The result will be reduced agricultural productivity.



3. HEKS-EPER positioning: development of rural communities

3.1. DevRC positioning in HEKS-EPER's strategy and working experiences

HEKS-EPER's strategy 2008–2012, page 15, states:

DevRC: HEKS supports rural communities – and isolated groups in densely populated urban areas – in their efforts towards self-determination and a secure livelihood. HEKS-EPER projects take the needs of communities into account as far as possible. They are tailored to relevant needs and include, for instance, the safeguarding of sufficient and balanced nutrition, access to resources (land, water etc.), the production, processing and marketing of agrarian products to boost income, and the promotion of economic independence by creating earning opportunities in the production and services sectors. The starting point is to safeguard the basic requirements of food and shelter, with the medium-term goal being the greatest possible degree of self-determination for rural communities.

Numerous working experiences have provided important input for the elaboration of HEKS-EPER's overall strategy regarding the DevRC. Some of most relevant can be summarised as follows:

- Rural development with special focus on smallholder agriculture is the key to overcoming the food crisis, because higher food production improves the self-sufficiency and supply of local markets.
- Where small farmers have enough land, water, money, tools and knowledge of agricultural techniques they produce a much higher nutritional value per acre than industrial agriculture does, usually with a significantly lower external input at lower costs and with less environmental damage.
- Food-security strategies and poverty-oriented development approaches for rural regions must be linked. Therefore the creation of jobs and income opportunities in agriculture and the rural service sector contributes to ensuring that poverty is reduced and the purchasing power of people is increased. If farmers know how to increase their yields and how to get access to the markets, they will have additional income to cover the costs for food, education and health.
- For the poor, this opens up new perspectives, which also contributes in helping to prevent the forced migration – in the majority of cases – of men to urban centres or abroad.
- To implement a sustainable development approach, people from rural communities must be active and assertive civil society actors who are committed to securing their needs and claiming their rights independently. This also means having an influence on policy and legislative frameworks.

3.2. HEKS-EPER's definition of DevRC: who and where

DevRC is a field of work in which HEKS-EPER has a long tradition of cooperation with its partners in other countries. HEKS-EPER operates in about 20 focus countries and on 4 continents. Cultural diversity, diversity of climates and natural environments, and different social stages of development are some of the main challenges for HEKS-EPER in the promotion of measures adapted to the context. Some of the key features to be taken into consideration can be summarised as follows:

Rural areas: specific characteristics

- often a lower population density in comparison to urban centres
- a strong dependence on natural resources for food security and livelihood
- a predominance of agriculture with related sectors (from production to marketing)
- strong fluctuations in income, according to season

- a lack of basic infrastructure and public services
- weak and imperfect markets
- persistence of traditional norms and value systems as well as gender relations, which determine economic and social relations
- disregard by policy makers
- low participation and involvement of marginalised rural communities in national decision-making processes
- the key function and role of women, which is often not recognised and perceived, in the context of production and reproduction and the living of a life free of violence
- lack of access to knowledge, education and training, and health facilities

Rural areas: geographical interpretation

- Rural areas include the commonly understood – often remote – **rural regions**.
- Rural areas may also include **regional centres**, which are often important market places for rural communities as well as service centres (training, health, education, etc.) and places of social exchange between urban and rural societies. Head offices of the relevant administrative units are usually situated in such centres, and hence play an important role in policy monitoring and negotiations, and in lobbying and advocacy activities.

Rural communities: who do they include?

According to HEKS-EPER's strategy, its work is focused on:

- disenfranchised people,
- members of minority groups,
- women and youth.

In the specifically rural communities, these are as follows:

- **Small-scale farmer families:** these families manage their own or rented plots; therefore the landless should also be included, as should families and communities that have been internally displaced due to violent conflicts or natural disasters.
- **Farmer's association or cooperatives:** these play an important role as they are often the basis for strengthening organisational development of rural communities and support them on the way to becoming self-determined social, political and economic actors.

- **Rural service providers:** non-agricultural services are connected to a wide range of survival strategies to generate income for families and groups of rural communities.
- **A diverse spectrum of traditional populations, such as indigenous communities, fishermen and -women, pastoral communities or those who practise gathering activities:** Their livelihoods are often based on collective or partly collective farming practices. In such groups, land titles are rare. Access to land and water are thus indispensable prerequisites for any rural development.

3.3. DevRC: general objectives, principles and working approaches

General objectives

- greatest possible self-determination and inclusion in decision taking of rural communities
- hunger and poverty alleviation – through targeted measures and integrated into a rights-perspective working approach
- security of rural basic services

Rural development, as envisaged in the development cycle of HEKS-EPER's projects, will aim for access to resources, production, processing, marketing and knowledge transfer. However HEKS-EPER understands a model of development not exclusively oriented to the promotion of a monetary value cycle; the aim is rather the greatest possible autonomy of rural communities. The holistic approach pursued therefore takes into account the diverse aspects of development cooperation and places special emphasis on the strengthening of target-group specific measures to alleviate hunger and poverty, integrated into a rights-based working approach. Therefore the promotion of rural basic services – which comprise components such as literacy and non-formal education for young people and adults, water-supply infrastructure, sanitation and hygiene measures, agricultural irrigation, saving and credit systems – are integral aspects of the DevRC concept if they can contribute to relevant impact on DevRC.

Working approaches

- **A participative approach:** members of the beneficiary population groups are involved in the projects and design. Important elements such as acceptance and ownership of the involved parties should be encouraged. HEKS-EPER usually works through local or regional partner organisations with grassroots organisations, such as rural communities, cooperatives, farmers' associations and women's groups.
- **Empowerment of the beneficiary groups:** Since HEKS-EPER knows from its project experience that governing bodies/individuals often fail to consider the needs

of vulnerable and marginalised population groups, the promotion of a strong civil society (which takes over the role to influence the government on these issues, so as to fight against social inequalities) plays a central role in the DevRC work. The empowerment of the beneficiary population groups gives people the ability to claim the enforcement of their rights and interests and to confront the relevant political authorities on those issues. Therefore, the collaboration is seen as a long-term process which goes through a joint development process. The focus on empowerment is also closely linked to the agenda for social reforms, as poverty is also caused by inequitable structures. In some countries the focus on empowerment means overcoming a belief in value being justified by birth.

- **Human Rights Based Approach:** the development concept that HEKS-EPER uses as a guideline in its DevRC work is based on the principle of sustainability and on the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA). These are not separate concepts, but are two sides of the same coin. HRBA principles and processes are seen as an imperative on the way to achieving the sustainability of the development of rural communities. Through a HRBA, the protection of human dignity in the context of DevRC will be given special priority.
- **Working in networks and knowledge sharing:** HEKS-EPER's network and knowledge-sharing approach is manifold. As HEKS-EPER usually works with small local and regional partners, the involvement of partners' work in thematic or political networks is crucial. HEKS-EPER strives to bring the different partner organisations in the programmes – but also countries and regions – into contact with each other. Synergies are to be used; exchange of knowledge and experiences and mutual learning are to be promoted. HEKS-EPER supports its partner organisations in conducting information campaigns and lobbying activities in the south with regard to thematic issues that are relevant for DevRC. This is done, on the one hand, to strengthen power in negotiating with government bodies and other society groups, and, on the other hand, to increase the outside visibility of misconduct, relevant reference experience and work success. Furthermore, HEKS-EPER connects with interest groups and networks occupied with political lobbying in favour of important international conditions for food security.
- **Gender equality:** HEKS-EPER is committed to the equal participation of women and men in all decision-making processes. Especially in agriculture and rural development, women have a key role. The targeted promotion of women and the inclusion of gender-relevant and gender-promoting activities and strategies, such as gender sensitisation of men and gender-related competences of partners, are therefore integral parts of the HEKS-EPER's DevRC concept. In order to achieve sustainable change regarding gender equality, HEKS-EPER considers not only the legal dimension, but also traditional aspects, cultural norms and value systems.

- **Integration of rural youth:** the involvement of young people in rural areas is a strategic concern of HEKS-EPER, as it is a common desire of human beings to become meaningful members of society and to live a decent life. Such involvement is necessary to strengthen the sustainability of rural communities' development processes and is therefore an investment in the future. The active involvement of young people in the construction and design of sustainable rural development processes is also an integral part of action strategies in violence prevention and conflict management. Poorly educated young men without prospects are particularly vulnerable to mobilisation by violent groups. The consideration and preventive integration of young people in rural development projects – for example projects on cultural and identity awareness – or measures related to professional education and training are central aspects of the implementation strategy of DevRC and integrated parts of conflict-sensitive project management.
- **Integration of HIV/AIDS:** HEKS-EPER is working in countries that are already seriously affected by HIV/AIDS or that could potentially see the epidemic worsening. HEKS-EPER has made the HIV/AIDS aspect an integral part of several projects and programmes. This mainly involves awareness building (prevention, nutrition), psychological support in the home, income-generating activities for people living with the infection or the disease, advocacy and lobbying.
- **Do no harm:** in the development of rural communities, HEKS-EPER often operates in contexts where underlying or open and violent social conflicts persist. Consequently, the «Do no harm» approach is pursued in project work: firstly, the supported measures should cause no adverse effects to the detriment of beneficiaries; secondly, local capacities for peace linked to the project should be strengthened. Review and monitoring of the activities for possible unintended consequences are parts of the DevRC implementation concept. Working principles and instruments, such as the «Do no harm» approach or Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA), are therefore transversal aspects of the conflict-sensitive project management of HEKS-EPER's DevRC projects.
- **Safety and security in conflict-prone areas:** implementing projects in conflict-prone areas requires special measures regarding the safety and security of the staff of HEKS-EPER and its partners as well as beneficiaries. People's life in conflict areas is often marked by insecurity, looting and frequent displacement. Projects should therefore be simple and flexible in order to be adaptable to volatile situations.
- **An integrative and synergy-generating approach:** a central strategy of the DevRC work is to monitor projects and programmes for mutual learning and synergy potential and to create space for innovative work approaches and initiatives, particularly at the interfaces with other thematic areas such as PCT or with related issues such as gender, education or HIV/AIDS.



4. DevRC: fields of intervention and implementation priorities

Development of rural communities is a huge field of intervention. Hence, the identification of core working areas proceeding from HEKS-EPER's specific competences and expertise is a challenge. In accordance with HEKS-EPER's development concept, the development cycles shown below provide orientation for the design and implementation of the programme activities in HEKS-EPER's focus countries.

Depending on the national or regional contexts, different conditions and stages of development can be found. It will not be possible for HEKS-EPER to cover all fields of work in each project region and each country at the same time or in the same way. Coordination with other actors is therefore needed to fill in gaps and avoid duplication. The regular monitoring of these fields, as well as the analysis and evaluation of the DevRC context and the strengths and weaknesses of HEKS-EPER's DevRC work, is part of the internal culture of dialogue within the International Division (ID) and an important prerequisite for a meaningful implementation of this concept paper.

4.1. Access to and defence of resources

According to HEKS-EPER's development cycle for rural communities, access to resources is the starting point and precondition for any sustainable development of rural areas. This means in particular that people get secure access to land and water; only then it is possible to guarantee to the population a sufficient amount of sustainable, autonomously self-supplied healthy, quality food, and to pave the way for further development.

Access to land, traditional territories and water

HEKS-EPER therefore supports its project partners and their beneficiary groups in their efforts to gain and secure access to resources, for instance regarding the struggle for land, the recognition and defence of their traditional territories, or compensation. Access to water – an increasingly scarce resource – plays a vital role for survival strategies. Such initiatives are often embedded in processes that aim at the realisation of national agrarian-reform projects based on national or international laws and frameworks.

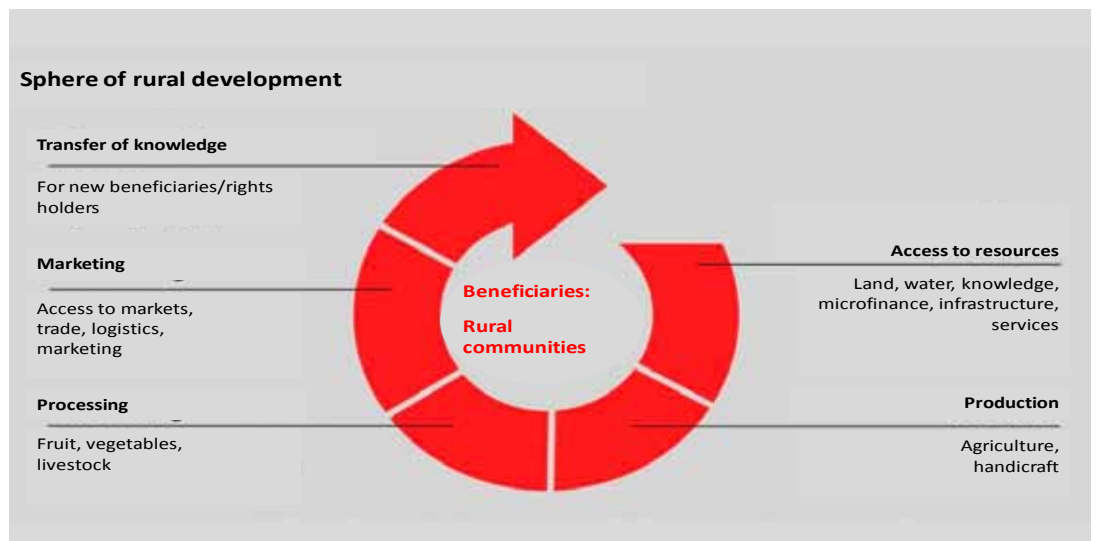
The HRBA, as transversal element of the HEKS-EPER's priority theme of DevRC, plays an important role in the field of access to resources in connection to the human right to food. HEKS-EPER stands for a rights-based, pro-poor development approach that must be linked to the context.

In particular, HEKS-EPER supports, through its partners' projects, initiatives that help marginalised and vulnerable groups in drawing attention to their situation (visibility) and strengthening their bargaining power with government as well as their lobbying and advocacy capacities in order to influence regional and national policy making, for instance with regard to the realisation of agrarian reforms or ESCR. HEKS-EPER will reject development approaches that rely exclusively on market-supported land-reform models that further exacerbate social disparities with regard to marginalised populations.

HEKS-EPER supports in its projects particular measures aimed at the promotion of women in regard to access and control over economic and natural resources and at the realisation/implementation of their rights, especially regarding access to land titles, credit and training. When the land belongs to a woman, she can decide what is planted. Access to loans for women enhances their ability to feed their families better, maintain children at school, establish reserves and overcome environmental and food crises.

Access to information and knowledge sharing

The development of human and social capital is a central concern and a fundamental component in the functioning of the development cycle of rural development. Therefore, as part of an integral working strategy, HEKS-EPER supports different measures to ensure access to information, such as transmission of knowledge through education, training, courses and



research or investigation into new farming methods. As HEKS-EPER has withdrawn its support of formal education, efforts are needed in the programme work to offer young people access to education and training in the informal sector. The promotion of catch-up literacy initiatives for children, women and members of ethnic minorities is often a prerequisite to active participation in rural-development processes. It makes sense that all these measures should be clear contributions to the development of rural areas and their communities.

The exchange of experience, particularly between farmers, is a proven strategic approach to knowledge transfer, knowledge management and transfer of experience, especially on a local level. Therefore, HEKS emphasises in its programme work the promotion of participatory and horizontal extension methods and services based on, for instance, the “Farmer to Farmer Approach”. The inclusion of traditional, local knowledge and culture in HEKS-EPER’s project work plays an important role. It mainly concerns practical contributions to solving complex problems with locally available resources. The targeted support of domain-specific knowledge, even on purely agronomic practices and content, such as training courses for rural services, is essential and provides valuable support for the development of rural areas.

HEKS-EPER also actively collaborates with research organisations committed to improving the productivity of traditionally resistant species and sustainable farming approaches. The task and challenge in HEKS-EPER’s project work are to combine, with respect and wisdom, methods of modern science with traditional knowledge and insights, and thus to contribute to the successful further development of support initiatives.

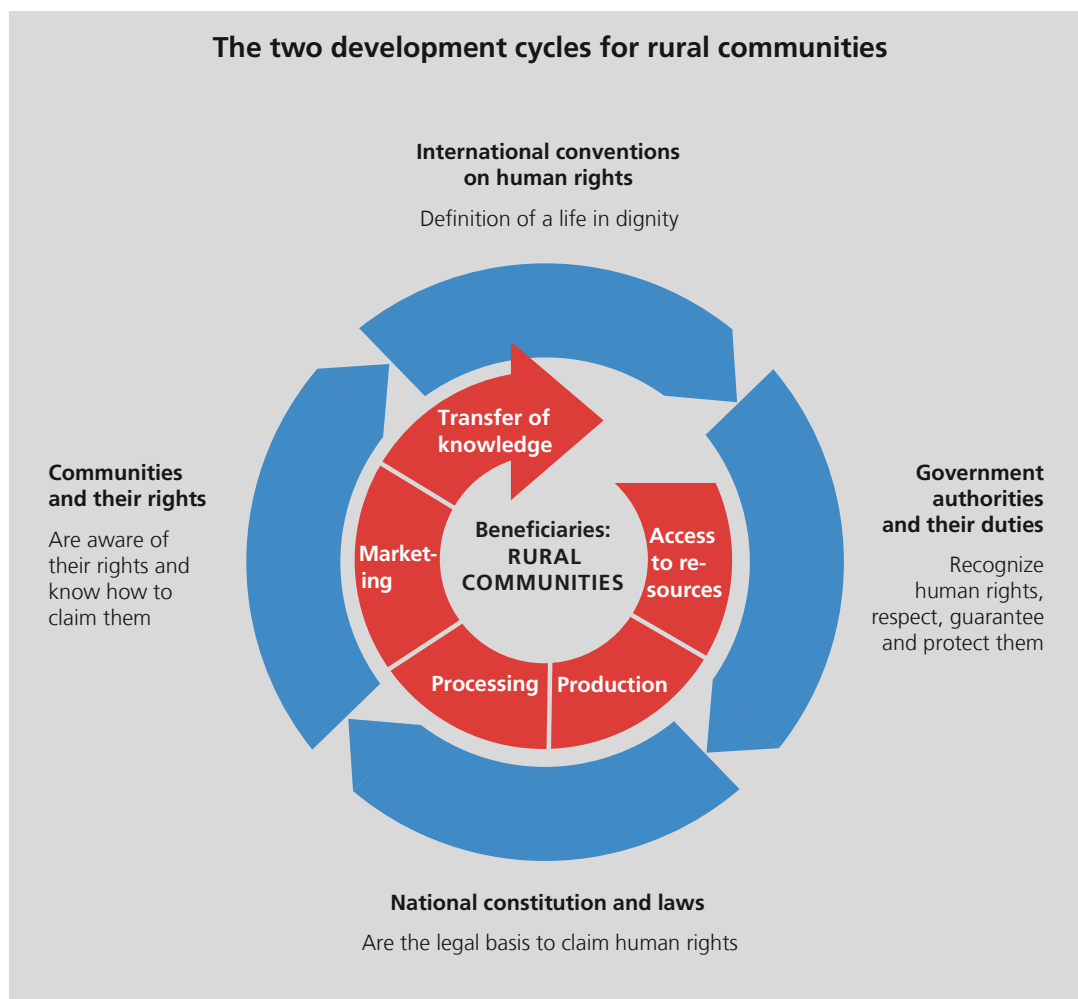
Furthermore, the identification and promotion of interested men, women and young people, who can take over the role and responsibility of precursor (“early adopters”) and leader, are proven strategies in HEKS-EPER project practice for the dissemination and development of technical and methodological innovations in rural communities.

Access to start-up capital, credit and microfinance systems

HEKS-EPER's projects stimulate innovative options to access credit, for instance in cooperation with existing and specialised, local institutions. Therefore, the local financial system has to be carefully analysed, in order to get an answer as to why the target group does not have access to credit.

In some cases, where no financial service providers are available in the region, creation of new credit unions can be an option, preferably within an existing network in the country and within a clearly market- and sustainability-oriented approach. Special emphasis should be given to the inclusion of women and young adults as beneficiaries of the measures.

In some programme regions of HEKS-EPER such a market-oriented approach may be only partly feasible because the risk for credit providers is too high to grant credit. For example, in situations of livelihood recovery after emergencies, in very poor rural areas or for the development



of innovative products, an approach of non-repayable start-up support is a feasible solution. An important criterion for HEKS-EPER is to ensure that, within the promoted initiatives, the target group makes a substantial contribution. This can happen in the form of labour services.

4.2. Sustainable production and food security

A huge field of work for the DevRC is the area of production, processing and marketing of products from small-scale agriculture. Even though access to resources – such as land, water and other agricultural inputs – may have been successfully achieved by rural communities, farming conditions of families are often difficult due to unfavourable locations, insufficient land, inappropriate techniques, and lack of skills and knowledge.

Sustainable agriculture a proven concept for food security for the poor

For HEKS-EPER, the production of food products and their equitable distribution to ensure the people's nutrition are priorities. An adequate and healthy diet is the basic prerequisite for all further steps in the development of rural communities. HEKS-EPER stands for customised, agro-ecological land-management practices in accordance with the location, which are focused on the diversification of production and a very low use of purchased, external inputs such as seed or synthetic fertilisers and chemicals. Quality seed production, based on locally adapted traditional varieties as well as the production and use of organic fertiliser may add further to sustainability. This concept also includes a meaningful integration of livestock production, agro-forestry and agro-silvo-pastoral systems, and gathering activities in the agricultural production system of families.

HEKS-EPER supports curiosity and interest of families in a conversion of their production systems, in order to strengthen agro-ecological experiences and initiatives, for instance through the promotion of pilot projects, exchange of experience or training. HEKS-EPER does not use and discourages partners in using genetically modified seeds, neither for food-producing plants nor other crops, such as fibre plants.

With regard to the conflict between food security and agro-fuels, HEKS-EPER supports innovative, ecologically and socially sound, manageable projects, which represent a contribution to secure local and regional energy needs for rural communities. These are integrated into the concept of a small-scale and diversified production system and in accordance with the location, in order, in particular, to avoid competition with the growing of plants for food production. For as long as there is no clear evidence against possible environmental damage and there is socio-cultural compatibility regarding the livelihoods of rural communities, HEKS-EPER will not support the cultivation of plants for export-oriented agro-fuel production.

Sustainable livestock management

Animal husbandry is an integral component of HEKS-EPER's programme work. Project activities envisage the improvement of large and small livestock, including fish farming or bee keeping. HEKS-EPER recognises the importance of livestock for the food security of rural communities (specifically for meat and dairy products) and its relevance for income generation. In addition, HEKS-EPER stresses the importance of other aspects such as draught power and manure production for rural production systems. Specific attention is given in some countries to the situation of traditional communities of pastoralist people, who often have weak or non-existent rights to land.

The improvement of indigenous animal breeds is an important strategy for livestock keepers; it combines innovative participatory research based on local knowledge with aspects of academic knowledge, for instance local breeds can be promoted for specific local functions or marketing of region-specific quality products

Furthermore, HEKS-EPER's projects aim to improve the social esteem of pastoralists among different stakeholders by emphasising their role in sustainable food production, in the preservation of indigenous livestock breeds, and as stewards of an intricate indigenous knowledge system on survival. In this context, HEKS-EPER's projects also support activities that strengthen the capacity of local associations of livestock keepers and traditional knowledge in order to strengthen systems of local control over indigenous property rights and livestock keepers' rights.

Water management

Water supply and water management are important challenges in many of HEKS-EPER's focus regions. The intention is to support rural families and communities to develop practices that envisage a sustainable use of local water resources in order to improve both the quality of drinking water and agricultural production. Therefore, the supported projects comprise a wide range of activities, which include water-conservation initiatives – for example construction of retention basins – as well as the promotion of experiences to guarantee safe drinking water for household consumption – for example through water-harvesting techniques or disinfection measures. Thus, HEKS-EPER's water projects often have an interdisciplinary character, as they also contribute to improving human health and sanitation aspects by reducing disease pressure and raising rural populations' awareness concerning aspects of hygiene and pollution.

Another important issue is the promotion of small-scale and locally adapted irrigation systems and water-saving irrigation techniques in order to support farmers to obtain better yields, guarantee more regular food production and enhance their capacity to increase the production of market crops and, consequently, family income. Emphasis is also given to activities that strengthen the rural communities' ownership of the management of local water resources, for instance by supporting the establishment of community-based water committees.

Adaptation, mitigation and preparedness strategies against climate and disaster risks

HEKS-EPER supports adaptation strategies of rural communities to mitigate climate change impacts as well as preparedness measures in the context of disaster-risk reduction. Forestation and the protection of existing forests stabilise local water resources, protect soil from erosion, increase biodiversity and enhance resistance to bad weather. Conservation farming, drip irrigation, and drought-resistant seeds, for example, might constitute other meaningful interventions. In coastal areas, forestation with mangroves or other protection measures constitute further safety precautions.

The use of a greater diversity of species with locally adapted traditional seeds increases not only the degree of food security and sovereignty of rural communities but also their capacity to resist fluctuating weather patterns such as extreme droughts or extreme rainfall.

The consequences of climate change and natural disasters also exacerbate gender inequalities and increase the vulnerability of women in rural communities. In this context, it is an important principle for HEKS-EPER to consider women not only as victims of the aftermath of such phenomena, but also as active actors with regard to adaptation and coping strategies, for example in relation to measures to improve food storage and stockpiling.

HIV/AIDS mainstreaming in rural development

In accordance with its integrated HIV/AIDS approach HEKS-EPER activities focus on awareness raising, prevention, nutrition and income security for affected families. HEKS-EPER pays attention in its project work to the development of appropriate agricultural practices, so that HIV-infected people with limited capacity for physical work can continue the operation of their plots, for example the cultivation of crops in gardens close to home or integrated medicinal plants. In families where the main people responsible for principal income sources are no longer able to work, project activities have to address the possibilities and needs of the remaining family members – often women, the elderly or children.

In the context of the integration of HIV/AIDS in DevRC work, there is in rural areas a close relationship with the shortcomings of education and information, as well as with the question of gender sensitisation. HEKS-EPER therefore promotes, for example, preventive education activities on relevant topics such as the sexual dominance of men, early marriage and contraception, particularly for women, youths and members of ethnic minorities.

4.3. Value creation and access to markets

In addition to addressing the complexities of production and food security, HEKS-EPER will focus its DevRC work on the support of projects and initiatives for further processing, marketing and the development of value chains as a strategy to promote sustainable development of rural

areas and their communities. The processing of products and their marketing are key aspects, but often pose a great challenge, since they usually concern groups such as cooperatives or associations with a low organisational profile.

Strengthening of and access to markets

Owing to HEKS-EPER's partner profiles, the promotion of manageable value-adding initiatives and of a market development based on local and regional level will be primarily supported.

The promotion of the collective initiatives of commercialisation, for example through cooperative associations or social enterprises, is also of great importance in HEKS-EPER's project practice. HEKS-EPER projects encourage an integrated value-chain approach, which strengthens the responsibility of rural families and communities, minimises the influence of retailer structures where they are unfair and, consequently, contributes to enhancing income-generating conditions for peasant families. HEKS-EPER encourages and supports the formation of social enterprises that are directly involved in production or service provision to a market. Such social enterprises have explicit social goals, such as job-creating training or provision of services. They are accountable to the community and have a governance and ownership structure based on participation.

Fair trade and the promotion of socially just products

Further initiatives that focus on the aim of fair trade and international marketing are exceptions in the contexts of HEKS-EPER's projects. However, taking into account the fact that certain countries provide favourable conditions for growing products (for example cocoa, coffee or rubber) with high demand on the global market but almost none on the national market, such initiatives should not be neglected. HEKS-EPER therefore places such initiatives in its support portfolio as they provide important references for the visibility and external presentation of the successes of partners' work and thus provide key elements for partners' strategic agricultural policy debates.

Importance of women and youth

Women are often not only the people most responsible for the food security of their families, but also often appear to be the most dynamic, trusted and successful entrepreneurs in the processing and marketing-oriented projects. Therefore, HEKS-EPER promotes measures in the area of value-adding initiatives that specifically place women farmers and young women at the centre of the value chain. The following form part of the activities: legal measures, appropriate credit schemes, support for income-generating activities of women, the strengthening of women's organisations and networks, and sensitisation of men.

Another concern of HEKS-EPER is the inclusion of young people in projects whose objective is the improvement of family income and the implementation of value-adding initiatives. This also includes innovative measures to encourage the interest and involvement of young adults.

Multifunctionality of agriculture

Agriculture is not seen only as a space for producing food. Instead, agriculture is an activity with multiple outputs; it produces not only goods – such as food and animal feed, fibre and medicines – but also commodity services such as environmental and social services, recreational opportunities and cultural assets – for example initiatives for the production of handicrafts or other services, such as rural community tourism and craft businesses beneficial for the development of a village. This integrative and holistic approach is a challenge for HEKS-EPER's programme work, as farmers must be better trained to think in terms of systems and to address environmental, economic and socio-economic issues in an entrepreneurial way. Especially for young people, this form of experiencing and understanding the potential and value of rural areas can be a great chance for a future in a rural context.

Glossary

DC	Development Cooperation
DevRC	Development of Rural Communities
ESCR	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
HA	Humanitarian Aid
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
HQ	Headquarters
ID	International Division
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
PCIA	Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment
PCT	Peace Promotion and Conflict Transformation
VC	Value Chain
KiZA	Kirchliche Zusammenarbeit - Interchurch Aid

HEKS
Geschäftsstelle
Seminarstrasse 28
Postfach
8042 Zürich
Tel. +41 44 360 88 00
Fax +41 44 360 88 01
info@heks.ch

EPER
Secrétariat romand
17bis, Boulevard de Grancy
Case postale 536
1001 Lausanne
Tel. +41 21 613 40 70
Fax +41 21 617 26 26
info@eper.ch

www.heks.ch
www.eper.ch