

# A perspective for the South Caucasus: Providing income opportunities and addressing conflicts

## Context

The South Caucasus is strongly influenced by its post-Soviet past. There is widespread poverty and lack of prospects – especially in rural areas. People are migrating to the cities or abroad, resulting in a high dependence on remittances from migrant workers. Besides, there are at least three «frozen» conflicts weighing on the relations of the national states and the respective ethnic groups involved, namely the conflicts among Nagorno Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Conflict transformation has been difficult due to the fact that the conflicts are often exploited for domestic political purposes but also due to gridlocked opinions and rampant nationalisms. The progress in conflict transformation has yet been very minimal. In addition to armed conflicts, the South Caucasus is also regularly affected by natural disasters such as earthquakes, floodings and droughts. On the one hand, the positive economic development in recent years is very unevenly distributed, and is limited mostly to urban areas. The HEKS/EPER South Caucasus programme therefore focuses on rural areas.

## Objectives, priorities, activities

The regional programme aims at providing the people in the South Caucasus with a perspective for their livelihood through the following activities:

- **Improving the living conditions of rural population:** The beneficiaries are to be enabled to meet their daily economic challenges on their own, among other things, through the promotion of inclusive market systems, vocational training, access to financial services and by boosting agricultural productivity.
- **Fostering conflict transformation:** Young people, media workers, opinion leaders and civil society is encouraged to question the dominant stereotypes,





disseminate information from alternative sources or with alternative content and endeavour to develop a vision for peaceful by means of the following: mobilising young people for conflict transformation, preparing alternative information and information sources and paving the way for and encouraging interaction between the parties in conflict.

- **Improving disaster resilience:** Partner organizations and HEKS/EPER offices are prepared for possible disasters and are able to act quickly and effectively.

### **Target groups**

---

Programme beneficiaries are people living in rural areas of the South Caucasus – especially smallholder families – as well as people impacted directly and indirectly by the numerous conflicts. At the operational level, HEKS/EPER works primarily with the following groups: market players including small producers, private sector players, young people, opinion leaders, media professionals and civil society organisations.

### **Partnerships, networks, alliances, memberships**

---

HEKS/EPER cooperates with 12 local partner organizations in the South Caucasus (NGOs, farmers' associations, small businesses) and is also active in national and international networks. In the present programme phase, efforts are to be made to build and utilise strategic partnerships.

### **HEKS/EPER on the ground**

---

The regional HEKS/EPER coordination office for the South Caucasus in Tbilisi (Georgia) has six staff members. Besides, two HEKS/EPER project teams are implementing mandates in Kakheti (Georgia).

### **Topics and working approach**

---

The HEKS/EPER programme for the South Caucasus has adopted the following working approaches:

- Systemic approach: The programme analyses interventions from a systemic perspective and strives for systemic changes.
- HEKS/EPER acts as a moderator rather than a service provider.
- Cooperation with all relevant players.
- Sustainable agricultural production, ensuring that there are good agricultural practises in place as a minimum bottom line.
- Fostering civil society through volunteering and not through professional service providers alone.
- Context-sensitive project planning and implementation.

#### **Region:**

South Caucasus: Armenia, Georgia

#### **Programme costs 2018:**

CHF 2 462 300.–

**HEKS/EPER No.:** 390.007

#### **Responsibility:**

Marc Zoss, Desk Officer for the South Caucasus

#### **Contact:**

Swiss Church Aid (HEKS/EPER)  
Communication  
Seminarstrasse 28  
8042 Zurich  
Switzerland  
Phone: +41 44 360 88 10  
E-mail: [projektdienst@heks.ch](mailto:projektdienst@heks.ch)  
[www.heks.ch/english](http://www.heks.ch/english)