

Rural development and strengthening civil society

Context

Despite being one of the world's most biodiverse countries, Brazil has been witnessing an ever greater threat to its varied biological and cultural diversity from the proliferation of large-scale soybean, sugarcane and eucalyptus plantations and from extensive cattle farming. The guardians of this biodiversity are smallholder families as well as indigenous and traditional communities. But their ability to practice their traditional farming is being steadily eroded as access to their land is either denied outright or becomes highly restricted. Access to water is also being more tightly controlled with increasing frequency. Human rights advocates and civil society are documenting the alarming surge in violations of territorial rights of indigenous and traditional communities as well as the growing criminalization of human rights advocates and social movements.

Objectives, priorities, activities

The geographical focus of the HEKS/EPER Country Programme is the Cerrado savanna region in central Brazil and Mato Grosso do Sul. Priority topics are access to land and territories, support for rural communities and building a strong civil society. The programme's overarching aims are to protect the land rights of smallholder families and traditional communities, improve the food situation and incomes of rural communities, conserve social and biological diversity, ensure access to and unrestricted use of natural resources as well as to strengthen rural organizations. This means devoting special attention to the situation of young people and women.





Target groups

The country programme's target groups are traditional peoples and communities (including indigenous peoples), beneficiaries under the national agrarian reform programme, smallholder families, landless people and squatters.

Partnerships, networks, alliances, memberships

Partner entities include local grassroots organizations, networks such as the PAD (Process of Networking and Dialogue), and church-run and social non-governmental organizations. To ensure that the grassroots organizations it supports are not isolated, HEKS/EPER promotes both their local networking and their integration into larger national networks. This affords them access to key forums in which to help shape regional and national policy on access to land and resources, agriculture and social and biological diversity.

HEKS/EPER on the ground

HEKS/EPER maintains a coordination office in Brasilia for project monitoring and consulting with partner organisations.

Topics and working approach

The work of HEKS/EPER and its partner organizations is rooted in a human rights-based approach. The right to food is enshrined in international law through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN in 1948 and the 1966 Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Domestically, this law is anchored expressly in Brazil's Constitution and implicitly in the various legal codes and decrees. HEKS/EPER and its partner organizations support citizens in claiming these rights.

Country:

Brazil

HEKS/EPER No.: 381.200

Responsibility:

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