



Non-Discrimination and Inclusion

HEKS/EPER strategy and achievements on non-discrimination and economic, political and social inclusion.

Why Non-Discrimination and Inclusion Matter

Global challenges

Over the last decades, significant progress in terms of poverty reduction and human development has been achieved worldwide.¹ Nevertheless, many groups remain excluded from this positive trend. Multiple sources evidence that inequality is still increasing worldwide.² Inequality has high economic costs and may also jeopardise political stability and peace. According to the UNDP, based on its Human Development Indicator, inequality concerning the fulfilment of fundamental rights, discrimination and absolute economic inequality are on the rise and remains a key obstacle to enhancing sustainable livelihood opportunities. More than 75% of households live in societies where income is more unequally distributed than in 1990. The increased nationalism and authoritarianism that took root in many countries as responses to insecurity, terrorism and financial crises, has led to growing hostility, discrimination and stigmatisation of certain groups. In addition, the coronavirus pandemic has the potential to lead to a massive increase in existing inequalities of wealth, gender and race. Hundreds of millions of people are being forced into poverty, lose their jobs, face hunger, provide unpaid care, lack access to education, healthcare, protective gear and vaccination, while many of the richest – individuals and corporations – are thriving³. The virus has hit an already profoundly unequal world and will further exacerbate poverty, exclusion and discrimination.

Exclusion and discrimination are based on the membership of people to a particular group or category, like geographic location, remoteness, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, migratory status, social group, age or disability. Poverty, inequality, discrimination and exclusion are not the same. However, social exclusion and discrimination are often interrelated with poverty. **Social inclusion**, focusing on the **participation of all people in society and equal rights** no matter their group belonging, complements the concept of **poverty**, which focuses more on **(socio-economic) disparities** between people. **Discrimination**, in turn, is anchored in the **prejudiced perception** of individuals based on their membership to a particular group or category. It involves behaviours towards groups, such as excluding or restricting members of one group from opportunities that are available to others⁴. Discrimination is not only about what is being explicitly said in public, but **also implicit messages and practices** and **what is not being said/done**. International experience of the past years shows that empowerment and access to services for excluded people are not enough but changing structures and fighting discrimination against excluded groups is inevitable to achieve de facto inclusive societies. Therefore, many actors decided to incorporate not only inclusion but also non-discrimination in their agendas. For example, the new Roma inclusion strategy of the European Union focuses on fighting discrimination, monitoring and investigation of discrimination, harassment and hate crime, providing redress to victims as well as raising awareness on discrimination, stigmas and prejudices.

Equality and discrimination

All people are entitled to equal rights, participation, and opportunities, without discrimination of any kind. Discrimination means unequal or different treatment or harassment. The right to equality and the prohibition of discrimination is explicitly set out in international human rights treaties and central to the protection of all human rights.

Over and above, inclusion, non-discrimination and equality are deep-seated in the international legal framework and key priorities of the actual international development discourse. Reducing inequality and the need for inclusive policies are at the core of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). 'Leave no one behind' is the central principle of the SDG 16 calls for peaceful and inclusive societies and SDG 10 demands a reduction of 'inequality within and between countries', with target 10.2 referring explicitly to inclusion and target 10.3. to discrimination. The SDGs demand to work with and for the most difficult-to-reach groups, which often do not only face poverty, but also exclusion and discrimination related to location, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, age or disability status. The international human rights legal framework contains various international instruments⁵ to combat specific forms of discrimination.

¹ UNDP, 2018: Though the global population increased from 5 billion to 7.5 billion between 1990 and 2017, the number of people in low human development fell from 3 billion (60% of global population) to 926 million (1%); the number of people in high and very high human development more than tripled, from 1.2 billion (24%) to 3.8 billion (51 percent).

² 82% of global wealth growth 2018 went to the top 1%, while the bottom half of humanity saw no increase at all.

³ OXFAM, 2021: The inequality virus.

⁴ HEKS/EPER 2011 Conflict Transformation Implementation Concept: Equal Rights and Conflict Transformation p.8.

⁵ Instruments to combat [discrimination against indigenous peoples](#), [migrants](#), [minorities](#), [people with disabilities](#), [discrimination against women](#), [ethnic](#) and [religious discrimination](#), or [discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity](#).

How HEKS/EPER responds

HEKS/EPER's understanding of social inclusion

HEKS/EPER understands social inclusion as a process aiming at ensuring equal rights, equal opportunities, and active participation in society for all, regardless of their social identities / group belonging (such as age, gender, race⁶, ethnicity, culture, religion or language, remoteness etc.), so that they can achieve their full potential in life.

It is a multi-dimensional process dismantling social barriers and exclusion through empowering people in raising their voice, getting organized and building up their capacities to change current power structures and build up relationship across all spheres of society.

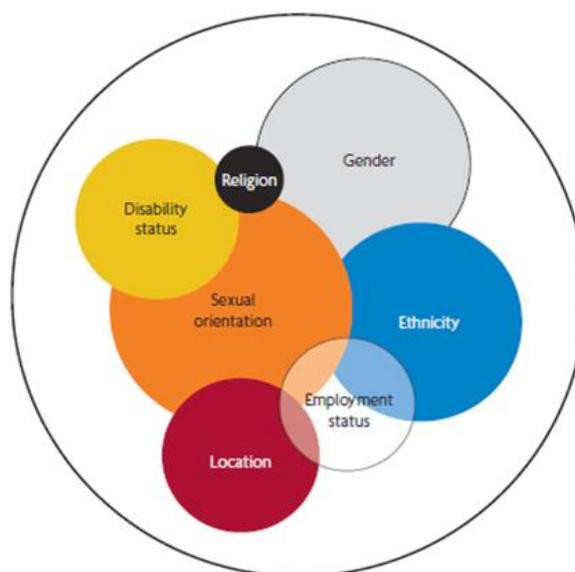
Inclusion and non-discrimination have been and continue to be at the core of HEKS/EPER's worldwide engagement. As anchored in the current HEKS/EPER international programme strategy, the overall vision of HEKS/EPER's development cooperation activities is to contribute to more equitable, peaceful and resilient societies by facilitating systemic change in land and natural resources governance and by overcoming social, political and economic discrimination. Moreover, HEKS/EPER is committed to the human rights-based approach (HRBA) based on the principles of participation, equality and non-discrimination and puts a strong focus on the most vulnerable. All endeavours aim to ensure equal rights, equal opportunities, active participation and dignity of people and communities excluded based on their social group belonging. Group belonging regarding ethnicity, race⁶, class, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, living in/origin from a remote area, migratory status, gender and other social categories are interrelated and intersectional (see figure below).

For HEKS/EPER, it is key to know these intersections and to take them into account when working towards social inclusion and non-discrimination. For example, working for and with women and girls in vulnerable communities, is often crucial, as they are most affected by ine-

qualities and discrimination. To fight discrimination, HEKS/EPER has to know and support the excluded, left behind and discriminated groups in each country and context. This approach requires a thorough rights-based analysis as discrimination takes many forms: For example, small-holder farmers are discriminated in some contexts (e.g. due to *de jure* discrimination or no government services to remote areas, that hinders the communities access to agro-services and productive resources, such as credit, seeds, land and water), while in other contexts they live a simple, but equated life.

Social inclusion encompasses access to basic services (education, health, etc.), land and resources, labour and markets, social and cultural spaces as well as inclusive and participatory governance structures. Combating discrimination is an integral step towards social inclusion. There is evidence that many efforts towards social inclusion are not fully effective as long as discrimination of the excluded groups is not addressed adequately. Thus, HEKS/EPER puts emphasis on deconstructing negative stereotypes, stigmas and prejudices, monitoring and investigating discrimination, raising awareness on discrimination as well as facilitating redress to people discriminated. Experience shows, that empowering and raising the voices of those discriminated against is essential but not enough to achieve inclusive societies. Thus, HEKS/EPER works with the mainstream society, discriminated communities and duty-bearers to tackle negative stereotypes, improve intergroup relations and fight institutional discrimination.

Striving towards social inclusion of discriminated and marginalised groups⁷, HEKS/EPER works with local NGOs, networks and movements rooted in, organising and/or representing these excluded groups. HEKS/EPER aims to strengthen these actors by supporting networking among peer organisations and link them up with regional, national, and international decision-making actors. Building inclusive networks, positive relations and trust is a long-term process that needs staying power and long-term financing.



Multiple, intersecting identities: Figure shows an illustrative example of types of identities. Source Worldbank 2013.

⁶ HEKS/EPER does **not** use race as a biological category, but as a social construct.

⁷ In its projects HEKS/EPER is addressing marginalized or discriminated groups such as Roma, Dalit, Adivasi, migrants and refugees, persons with disabilities, children, sick or elderly people, also, indigenous or traditional communities in rural areas.

Promising Practices Worldwide

Eastern Europe – social inclusion and equality for Roma and other vulnerable groups

In most countries of **Eastern Europe**, a significant proportion of the population is at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Roma are among the most affected population groups, with poverty levels at least twice as high as those of the majority population, very high unemployment rates and a still significant gap in educational attainment compared to the overall population of the respective country. Access to public institutions and services, for example to education and medical care, but also to public infrastructures such as electricity, water or sewage supply is often limited for Roma communities.

In most countries in Eastern, Central and Southeast Europe, Roma remain the single most excluded group, with levels of poverty and extreme poverty at least twice as high as in the majority population, unemployment rates of up to 90%, and still a considerable gap in educational achievements compared to the overall population in the respective country. Thus, the programme continues to target Roma communities specifically but not exclusively, by promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of the Roma population in Romania, Kosovo, Serbia, Hungary, Slovakia and the Ukraine in the areas of education, labour market inclusion and improvement of housing conditions.

The focus lies on improving the political and institutional framework in the respective countries to achieve systemic changes. In the previous programme cycle (2016-19), the programme has e.g. succeeded in creating a legal basis for including educational support for disadvantaged students into the national school system in Kosovo and generating recognition and public funding levels in the country itself of 60-100% for after-school support for vulnerable students in Romania.

EASTERN EUROPE – Social inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups



The regional programme promotes policy and institutional changes for inclusive education, labour market inclusion and improved housing conditions, with a special focus on combating antigypsyism and discrimination. It reaches around 10'000 direct beneficiaries per year.

Evidence on the European level has shown that efforts towards social inclusion are often not fully effective because they pay too little attention to the underlying negative attitudes and discrimination against the Roma population. HEKS and its partners have therefore stepped up the fight against discrimination and antigypsyism in the current programme phase, defining it as an objective in its own right. At the same time, successful models for the Inclusion of Roma and other disadvantaged communities from previous projects will be continued and fully integrated into the respective educational and social systems.

Consultations with a wide range of stakeholders working on social Inclusion in Europe concluded that the failure to address antigypsyism and discrimination effectively is one of the most important reasons why many social inclusion efforts have been only partly successful in the past.

In the new phase of the regional programme, HEKS/EPER is therefore giving greater importance to acting upon antigypsyism and discrimination, e.g., through trainings for service providers, campaigns in which stereotypes are challenged and alternative narratives strengthened, or through support for inclusive small-scale civil society projects and local church congregations.

HEKS/ EPER and its partners apply the following three main strategies ...

1) Promoting the policy and institutional framework for social inclusion

- Networking of civil society actors and promoting their participation in elaborating and implementing national Roma inclusion strategies.
- Full integration of the educational support measures into the local school system: after-school support on free half-days for primary school pupils, scholarship programme; improvement of the position of Roma assistant teachers, including elaboration of quality standards and capacity building.
- Advocacy for active labour market policies (e.g. internship programmes for disadvantaged young job-seekers) and the respect of employment quotas for minorities in the public sector.
- Advocacy for participatory approaches to legalisation and upgrading of houses/settlements as part of national housing strategies and urban planning and for house legalisation programmes.

2) Awareness raising on and combating discrimination and antigypsyism

- Development of anti-discrimination and diversity trainings to raise civil servants, service providers, and employers in the private and public sectors.
- Strengthening Roma communities to deal with antigypsyism and discrimination through information, empowerment and advocacy for access to free legal aid and remedies.
- Campaigns/media work to promote Roma inclusion and to combat antigypsyism.
- Promoting joint activities of Roma and non-Roma through small-scale projects in schools, community centres, churches and cultural institutions; working towards the inclusiveness of churches.

3) Promoting inclusive services and participation on the local level in the fields of

Inclusive Education

- Promotion of inclusive school practices: Mentoring of school development teams; quality assurance and transfer to municipalities/state of the support models established in the previous programme phases (after-school classes, learning centres, scholarships with mentoring/tutoring); trainings in inclusive and intercultural education in cooperation with local pedagogical institutes.
- Career guidance to promote the access of disadvantaged young people to good quality vocational schools with good links to the labour market; drop-out prevention in vocational schools.

Economic Inclusion

- Targeted internship programmes and trainings, mentoring/coaching, etc. for young Roma and other disadvantaged young people to increase their competitiveness in the labour market.
- Sensitisation of employers, promotion of support structures, diversity management and coaching in companies, and cooperation between employers and vocational schools.
- Facilitation of cooperation between municipalities/regions, professional schools, and private sector to enable transition from education to employment for disadvantaged groups.

Adequate Housing

- Legalisation of houses in informal settlements that become permanent (preparation of documentation, registration in the cadastre, clarification of ownership) in cooperation with respective municipalities.
- Participatory house-upgrading through 'Dweller Driven Approach for House Upgrading', which includes co-financing from and coordination by municipalities and governments.

Participation and Active Civil Society

- Ensure civil society participation in inclusion processes; establishment of functioning monitoring of services, including a clearly defined role of civil society actors.
- Support inclusion processes of local churches and community centres.
- Stimulate local initiatives through small grant schemes.
- Women empowerment.

Bangladesh – Social, economic and political Inclusion of Dalit and Adibashi

In the phase 2017-2021 HEKS/EPER strengthens social inclusion of Dalit and plain land ethnic minorities, mainly in the Northwest. The discrimination of Dalit and Adibashi in Bangladesh is manifold and lasting for many generations. Due to the traditional perception of being 'polluted' and/or inferior (partly linked to concepts of religious purity and 'untouchability'), massive discrimination, lacking respect, aggressive and disgracing behaviour towards them, sneering at their professional activities and cultural practices and a lack of institutional mechanisms are their daily life experience.

To ensure the social Inclusion of Dalit and Adibashi in the Northwest of Bangladesh HEKS/EPER is striving to achieve the following goals:

Inclusion of Dalit & Adibashi

In Bangladesh, HEKS/EPER strengthens the social inclusion of Dalits and plain land ethnic minority living in the Northwest with a human rights-based approach.

Through its programme HEKS/EPER reached 2021 about 40'000 Dalit and Adibashi supporting their social, economic and political inclusion



Participation in local decision-making.

- Strengthening Dalits and Adibashi to claim and enjoy their rights and to fulfil their obligations, to be active participants in society.
- Equal access to essential services and safety net schemes.
- Equal economic opportunities and improvement of economic status.
- Access to land for Dalits and Adibashi.
- Improved relationship with the mainstream society.
- Improved security in the Dalit and Adibashi communities.
- Establishing institutional mechanisms in favour of rights of D/A.
- Improve the knowledge of Adibashi communities regarding CCA and alternative livelihoods.
- Local/regional networks of Adibashi and Dalit to claim their rights.

To achieve these goals, the community mobilisation and organisational development, the awareness-raising of Dalits, Adibashis and mainstream society, and permanent and intensive advocacy on the local, regional, national and international level is key. Due to the advocacy efforts for rights of Dalits and Adibashi on the national level, HEKS/EPER and its partners have successfully reached major milestones: Together with partner organisations, an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on plainland Adibashi and Dalit rights has been formed to further sensitise policymakers and a national civil society platform has been established, to raise collective voice in favour of Dalits and Adibashi and to promote their rights. To raise collective voice and create critical mass in favour of Dalits and Adibashi rights, national mass media have been engaged, and a total of 40 Advocacy Platforms have been established both at subdistrict and district level. Moreover, through district-level platforms and core partners, Dalits and Adibashi issues have also been included into local level implementing plans.

As a result of previous advocacy initiatives, social inclusion of Dalits and Adibashi has gained weight on the national agenda and the Government of Bangladesh started to budget more funds for social inclusion initiatives. However, despite these positive achievements, the tense security situation for minorities, the shrinking space of Dalit and Adibashi organisations, and the ongoing exclusion of minorities remain key challenges in Bangladesh.

Romania – inclusion of persons with disabilities in Transsylvania

ROMANIA – Inclusion of people with disabilities



4 shelters provide protected jobs for people with disabilities. A job mediation center counsels persons with disabilities and employers in Sfantu Gheorghe.

Hundreds of mainstream people are sensitized for social inclusion of disabled and elderly people.

Since 2015, HEKS/EPER facilitates together with the local Diakonia the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Sfantu Gheorghe, Oradea and Reghin City in Romania. The inclusion of persons with disabilities is promoted through therapies, day-care, personal development workshops, job mediation, protected jobs and shelter homes, etc. Being part of the HEKS/EPER church cooperation, the project also promotes the sensitisation

of the church congregations, barrier-free church services, inclusion of persons with disabilities in church services., etc.

In 2020, 8 sensitisation events such as virtual Outsider Music Fest and Quarantine Edition were held. There were more than 25 persons with disabilities and musicians involved. The events reached 1’135 people. During the first quarantine from March to June, special barrier-free devotions were held every morning via a dedicated Facebook site. At least 18 people with disabilities were following daily. 10 barrier-freeing projects such as building ramps, camps and equestrian therapy for people with disabilities were realised. The project does not only provide ‘protected jobs’, but also promotes the economic and social inclusion of people with disabilities in the mainstream job market and mainstream society: A special job mediation office (ER-GON Special Vocational Occupational Counselling and Job Mediation Office in Sfantu Gheorghe) helps people with disabilities to find a job and useful occupation, to lead self-determined lives, and to find their way to achieve greater social inclusion. Despite the challenging situation due to the pandemic, till the end of 2020, 3 companies have been surveyed, 30 people with disabilities counselled, and 24 new employees could be hired and supported in Sfantu Gheorghe and its surroundings.

There were two conferences and several inclusion workshops for church leaders, employers and animators of people with disabilities organised throughout Transylvania. 10 people with disabilities played in a band together with other members and participated in the Outsider Music Festival and Saint Georg Day. On March 21, at the World Down Syndrome Day, Diakonia sang with a choir of 200 handicapped and non-handicapped children in the middle of the city. In Summer, 30 motor riders pleased 30 people with a handicap to ride with them for a couple of hours. They organised an exhibition of beautiful paintings and drawings of people with disabilities in the dining room of a big company. Some of the works of art could be sold for an excellent price. The local newspaper reported on a whole page with appreciation about this project and its impact.

All these initiatives are essential for Romanian society because people with disabilities are still neglected by many. There are nowhere near enough facilities, therapy, activities or job opportunities for people with disabilities since the social system in Romania is very ailing and weak.

Worldwide – overcoming discrimination of small-holder farmers

In many countries, small-holder farmers are discriminated *de jure* (if the national legal frameworks do not respect and protect the rights of peasants) and/or *de facto* (if appropriated laws are not fulfilled). In some regions, for example, in Haiti, Brazil or Ethiopia, the mere remoteness of poor people working in rural areas hinders their access to services and productive resources, such as credit, seeds and water.

In Cambodia, indigenous people traditionally organise the land in their community jointly, allocating parts of the land to families, communal land, spiritual land and reserve land for future families. The right to follow this practice is guaranteed by law. However, the process to register under so-called communal land titles is expensive, complicated and long, including many administrative hurdles. HEKS/EPER supports communities to obtain these land titles and engages in improving the process. Additionally, HEKS/EPER Cambodia establishes and supports conflict resolution mechanisms and processes to solve conflicts around land and water, typically between poorer and richer farmers as well as between small-holder farmers and companies.

Globally, HEKS/EPER supports vulnerable small-holder farmers with concrete projects fighting discrimination and facilitating inclusive markets, sustainable food and agriculture systems, inclusive land governance models and sustainable land-use practices.

Moreover, HEKS/EPER supports global advocacy to strengthen the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. In a broad alliance of civil society organisations, HEKS/EPER promoted the adoption and now implementation of the “Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas” (UNDROP). The Declaration outlines States’ responsibilities to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of discriminated peasants and other people working in the rural area.

UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas

The UNDROP builds on, and includes agreed language taken from a number of binding international treaties.

The Declaration encompasses the important rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas to overcome discrimination. HEKS/EPER continues to enhance the implementation of the UNDROP in future and support peasants to meaningfully claim and enjoy their rights. The concrete implementation of the UNDROP will also present challenges within Switzerland, when it comes to bringing Swiss agricultural or trade policy in line with the UNDROP, for example with regards to bilateral trade agreements or laws on intellectual property rights.



Cambodia: Cashew project in rural Northeast of Monduliri promoting inclusive market to overcome economic exclusion.

Achievements & Perspectives

Achievements over the past years

During the last decades, HEKS/EPER supported and facilitated processes towards enhancing the inclusion and fulfilment of rights of discriminated and excluded minority groups such as Roma, Dalit, Adivasi and other indigenous or traditional communities in Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa and Asia.

The experience of HEKS/EPER shows that lack of trust within excluded groups as well as from and towards the mainstream society is a **key challenge to social inclusion**. Other hindering factors are informal relations and nepotism, the pitfalls of assimilation or segregation, lack of interest of duty-bearers, scarce resources and fear of mainstream society to lose their privileges.

According to HEKS/EPER's experience, promising practices to overcome social exclusion are the institutionalisation of successful models for social inclusion such as educational support or scholarship programs, promotion of inclusive institutions, multi-level advocacy for social inclusion, advocacy for the legalisation of houses and informal settlements, co-tutoring in education, the dweller-driven approach for house-upgrading and the diapraxis approach (for details see chapter 'promising practices worldwide').

In **Eastern Europe**, Romania, Serbia, Kosovo, Hungary, Slovakia and Transcarpathian Ukraine, HEKS/EPER focuses on the social inclusion of Roma people. In its Roma Inclusion Programme, long-term achievements were made to reduce the gap between Roma and non-Roma populations regarding housing, education, income & employment. HEKS/EPER has successfully developed good practices and advocated for their mainstreaming, e.g., in the education system (concrete results see next chapter). Through HEKS/EPER's church cooperation, church organisations in Eastern Europe promote social inclusion and care for excluded people: In the Czech Republic, migrant workers are informed about their rights and protected in emergency cases, in Hungary and Slovakia, church congregations implement projects to promote Roma inclusion and in Romania home care services for elderly people; people with disabilities and victims of domestic violence are supported as well.



Bangladesh: Dalit Children in Sujapur.

In **Asia**, HEKS/EPER supports vulnerable peasants discriminated by the government and/or big market players. In Bangladesh HEKS/EPER strengthens the social inclusion of Dalit and plain land ethnic minority (Adivasi). In the past years, HEKS/EPER successfully contributed to better access to services, land, economic opportunities, and improved economic status of these minorities. Dalit and Adivasi people have been strengthened and involved in advocacy, leadership, negotiation skills, collective voice raising for social inclusion. Through the programme, the relations between the excluded and mainstream society have improved. Both groups have now taken initiatives to counter social exclusion and jointly solve community problems.

In **Africa** and **Latin America** HEKS/EPER contribute to overcoming discrimination and fights for equal rights for land-less, disenfranchised, indigenous, excluded, oppressed, displaced and conflict-affect people and communities. Since women and girls are often excluded and left behind, HEKS/EPER emphasises the fulfilment of women's rights and including them in all parts of its engagement. Moreover, HEKS/EPER works in both regions, especially with young and internally displaced people and refugees.

Achievements 2020

To describe progress of inclusion HEKS/EPER – amongst others – uses the key indicators 'access to basic services', 'own initiative taken for equality and non-violence' and 'women that report effective participation'. In Eastern Europe, HEKS/EPER does not only work with its development cooperation approach, but also with church organisations that focus on social inclusion of marginalised women and men, elderly, handicapped.

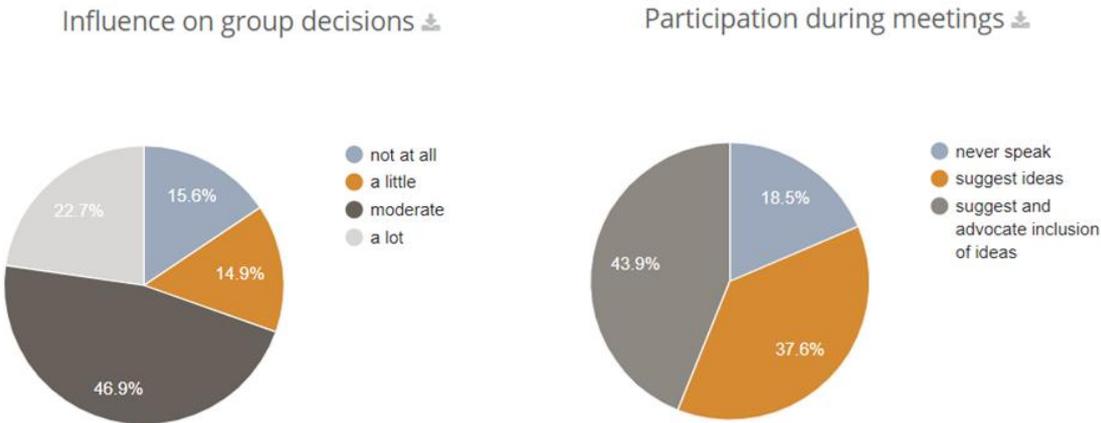
Worldwide

HEKS/EPER enabled **access to basic services** for 16'627 people – in Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, DR Congo and in Eastern Europe in Moldova, Kosovo, Serbia and Romania. 6 projects in 4 countries collected digital data with additional qualitative info of 2'225 individuals; 1'438 women got access to services thanks to HEKS/EPER. More than 1'435 belong to minority groups such as Dalit or Adibashi in Bangladesh or to groups excluded from social or health services such as elderly people in rural areas of Moldova. Most services where

community services aiming at improving the livelihood of individuals or household through access to public water or hygiene systems, roads or a newly granted education or medical service.

The indicator **'# of own initiatives taken for equality and non-violence'** is essential to follow-up the success of capacity building endeavours in how far they resulted in own initiatives of communities. These own initiatives show commitment and behavioural change and are thus an indicator for the possible sustainability of a project. Data gathered from 4 projects in 3 regions (South Caucasus, DR Congo and Isr/Pal) show that - despite COVID-19 - **84 activities** have been implemented and traced: 83% were collective initiatives. 35 % were taken up independently; 51% were facilitated by HEKS/EPER and 14% supported by other organisations. Almost 1'000 people in the South Caucasus and 3'100 in DR Congo were involved. Pal/Isr initiatives aimed to promote equality for more than 200'000 people.

Women's effective participation in decision-making bodies at the community level has been measured in 11 projects in 5 countries. Women reported moderate (47%) or high (23%) influence in community bodies in which they participated. In 38% of the organisations, the women feel encouraged to suggest ideas, and in 44% of organisations they even advocated for the adoption of their ideas (which is 10% more than it was in 2019). However, in 19% of organisations the women never spoke out, and in 30% of organisations the women feel that they have little or no influence.



Effective women participation in decision-making bodies at community level (data from 11 projects in 5 countries).

Eastern Europe

HEKS/EPER assisted with DC projects directly promoted inclusion for 18'103 people; indirectly 120'000 working towards various objectives – mainly fostering **social/market inclusion** and **improved inter-group relations**.

The results of the 'inclusion indicator' **equal access of disenfranchised people to basic rights and services** shows that only in Eastern Europe 5'941 individuals received access to education, housing, health and social services thanks to the projects. The **Roma inclusion programme** in Romania, Serbia, and Kosovo HEKS/EPER reached 3'941 people.

Access to basic services in HEKS/EPER Eastern Europe development projects	
Individuals	Country
2'000	Moldova
1'966	Kosovo
1'371	Romania
604	Serbia
5'941 in total	

Housing: In **Kosovo**, HEKS/EPER did no longer invest directly in house upgrading, but since 2020 establishes cooperation with municipalities which in turn subsidise a housing programme for marginalised, based on successful models developed previously. Negotiation are taking place with 3 municipalities, out of which 1 agreed already. A three-year housing action agreement with Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning was reached that considers the needs of marginalised, including those living in informal settlements. In **Serbia**, house legalisation continued with administrative procedure, preparation of technical documentation for houses in three Roma settlements in Novi Sad, one Roma settlement in Arandelovac, 2 Roma settlements in Raška and 1 Roma settlement in Požega. In total, 150 houses continued the process of legalisation during 2020.

- Education:** In **Serbia**, 200 children benefitted from various educational programmes of partner EHO in tutoring and learning support during the COVID-19 measures.

In **Kosovo**, HEKS/EPER enabled 19 learning centres in 12 municipalities to support 891 children. 534 secondary students received scholarships, of which 200 also mentoring and 127 tutoring support. Initiated by HEKS/EPER partners, after-school support made a step forward as cooperation agreements were signed to institutionalise the programme of 17 learning centres. They will be managed by respective municipalities starting from 2021 with the partial financial support of HEKS/EPER until they take over full responsibility.

In **Romania**, educational support and social inclusion activities for 1'660 Roma children in 52 localities were enhanced, with 123 children participating at the COVID-19 catch-up educational summer camp in August. 82% of parents were reached for workshops/meetings for sensitisation on education, COVID-19 and inclusion. Overall, 2'755 children and young students were supported. Advocacy to legally institutionalise the financing of after school programmes were approved, offering vouchers for pupils – piloting started, the nation-wide budget will be 30 M Euro.

In **Hungary**, 750 students of vulnerable background profit from efforts of 4 reformed schools to offer inclusive education system. Two other schools developed an action plan to become inclusive schools as well. Additionally, the Roma inclusion project offered after-school fostering school performance and life skills to create long-term perspectives for 300 Roma students.
- Income & employment in Kosovo:** A consortium continued to focus on job mediation, internship program, and advocating for increasing the share of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians working in public institutions. A cooperation agreement was signed with the state Employment Agency to support Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian. 50 young job-seekers have started an internship program, and 14 got employed by the end of the year. 90 young people were part of the information and mediation process, and 20 got employed. The consortium identified 14 informal Roma construction groups all over Kosovo and supported 5 of them to formalise their construction companies and register their business.
- Access to **social assistance** and **health care** was provided through DC partner CASMED in **Moldova** reaching out to more than 600 elderly and sick. Additionally, CASMED provided health and prevention assistance related to COVID-19 for overall 2'000 people. In **Romania** 260 sick and elderly were part of the DC-funded home care programme. In **Serbia**, CC-funded Diaconia Home Care Service supported 1'192 elderly and sick – with visits varying from 1 to dozens per person.
- Inclusion:** In **Kosovo**, an antigypsism campaign was launched with key politicians, journalists and human rights activist as messengers for non-discrimination, and with a social media campaign viewed by 170'000 people. An antigypsism summit and a conference with key stakeholders participating were successful.

Church cooperation: In **Eastern Europe**. HEKS/EPER also works on social inclusion of marginalised groups through church cooperation focusing on three areas: i) home care for elderly and sick/handicapped in Romania, Ukraine and Serbia; ii) Roma inclusion in Hungary, Slovakia, Ukraine; iii) on migration/refugees in the Czech Republic, in Hungary, Slovakia and Serbia. These **CC inclusion projects reached 19'700 individuals**. In the **Middle East** Church Cooperation's activities on social inclusion reached 11'050 people including Syrian refugees in Lebanon (1'480 people) or in Syria enabling almost 5'000 Muslim and Christian children and youth access to education an after-school programmes.

This is HEKS/EPER

HEKS/EPER is the aid organisation of the Swiss protestant churches and campaigns for a more peaceful and equitable world supporting in 2020 jointly with 100 partner organisations and strategic global alliances with 143 projects in 33 countries people and communities in economic and social need, investing worldwide 37.58 million CHF.

HEKS/EPER is active in **development cooperation** ameliorating in 2020 with 16.14 M CHF the life of 205'000 people directly – indirectly, 2.63 M people were reached. HEKS focusses on access to land and resources, securing basic services, fostering agroecological production and inclusive market systems. It promoted conflict transformation and inclusive governance structures in the countries as well as social, economic and political inclusion of disenfranchised people.

With a budget of 17.49 M CHF, HEKS/EPER's **humanitarian aid** supported 3'388'000 people affected by disasters with emergency interventions, to save lives, restoring livelihoods and rehabilitating infrastructure. In the frame of **Church Cooperation** HEKS/EPER enabled with 3 M CHF social work of Reformed Churches in Eastern Europe and the Middle East reaching out to 38'700 people. Additional 0.94 M CHF were invested in cross-sectional IC activities such as capacity building of partners and communities. **Systemic change** and the **human rights-based approach** are guiding principles, also promoting the **nexus** between humanitarian and development activities. HEKS/EPER cultivates constant dialogue with all relevant development and Government actors, protecting civil society actors and enabling them to advocate for their needs and rights.

In Switzerland, with a budget of 28.8 M CHF, HEKS/EPER supported disadvantaged people in becoming socially and economically integrated by promoting equal opportunity, and assists jobless people, refugees and other individuals with providing day structures, legal advice, vocational trainings, language courses, dialogue platforms etc. in 14 cantons.

Other HEKS/EPER publications related to 'Inclusion & Non-Discrimination'

- HEKS/EPER (2012): Conflict Transformation Implementation Concept.
- HEKS/EPER (2011): Human Rights-Based Approach. Parts 1–3. Implementation Concept.

Strategies, policies, reports published on I ID's Governance website: https://en.heks.ch/Institutional_Governance



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