



Our Values and Core Beliefs

We are the Swiss Interchurch Aid organisation. Our Church roots shape the core beliefs that are central to our actions. They find their expression both in our mission statement and in our strategic planning. The following shows how values and core beliefs are present in our actual work.

Faith – Hope – Love

We stand up for a more humane and equitable world. The focus of our commitment is on the dignity of every human being in the spirit of the gospel of charity. Faith fosters a basic trust in oneself and those around us, hope gives confidence in the future and love is the epitome of humanity.

Human Rights

Respect for the dignity of the individual is also expressed in universal Human Rights. Our actual work in Switzerland and abroad is guided by international agreements on economic, social and cultural rights as well as political and civil ones.

Basis of Values

We are equally aware of the Christian roots of our engagement and of the fact that there is a multitude of value systems and core beliefs which are central to the well-being of humankind. These are to be respected. Even with differing fundamental ideological and religious beliefs, it is still possible to champion the values and causes of importance to us and to work in partnership with others.

The three elements of a Christian view of mankind outlined in the HEKS Strategy 2008 to 2012 led to **nine core beliefs** which should be apparent in our actual work.

Human being is created by God.

We have no arbitrary power over life. The dignity and basic rights of the individual must be respected and protected.

- 1. Justice:** We are committed to a fairer world, precisely because we respect the dignity of every human being. This is why we support individuals or entire communities in the assertion of their rights.

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2. **Self-determination:** We help people to lead a self-determined life. Our work is therefore governed by the principle of «helping people help themselves» as we purposely develop existing potential and resources. We consider it important for people not only to develop themselves as individuals but also to foster a sense of community and to assume responsibility for society.
3. **Respect:** We are committed to the protection of creation and therefore respect all life. We deal mindfully with people and advocate peaceful coexistence. Our actions are always directed towards long-term, sustainable goals. In so doing, we contribute to a stable livelihood for future generations.

Human being are in relationship with each other.

We are interwoven with all of life. This means we have a duty of solidarity with, and aid for, people in need, regardless of their origin.

4. **Solidarity:** We are committed to solidarity with those people whose dignity is violated, whose existence is threatened or whose rights are denied. For this reason we seek to alleviate material and emotional distress. We highlight the causes of poverty and injustice and fight against them. We give a voice to disadvantaged and disenfranchised people.
5. **Help without boundaries:** The interdependence of humanity and all of life knows no political, cultural, ethnic, social, religious or any other boundaries. Our help is therefore given regardless of man-made barriers such as these in society.
6. **Responsibility:** Not only are we responsible to the Creator and to our fellow human beings, we are also accountable to our donors and to our people of concern.
We have a duty of clarity with regard to the deployment of the funds entrusted to us. We give clear and comprehensible reasons for decisions that can have implications for beneficiaries. Our reporting is transparent, whilst our successes are described alongside the inevitable setbacks and disappointments.

Every human being is fragile.

This gives rise to the principle of reciprocity of all aid. We are conscious that we all depend on the help of others time and time again.

7. **Participation:** We include the relevant people in the planning and implementation of projects and programmes as far as possible, thus enabling them to give a real input. We respond to their needs and concerns, and we debate the key issues. It is our aim for people to experience joint responsibility for changes and to establish these locally, thus securing their longer-term future.
8. **Proximity to people:** It is our wish in all areas of our work to be close to people. This is why we cultivate dialogue and communicate clearly, openly and honestly. We draw alongside people from different backgrounds, thus encouraging personal interaction.
9. **Effectiveness:** Aid must never be an end in itself. Its efficacy must in fact be measured by whether it has had a positive impact on the lives of those concerned. We therefore attach great importance to a careful monitoring of the effectiveness of our programmes and projects.

The nine core beliefs should be both tangible and visible in the following specific areas of our work:

- Programme and project work
- Fundraising
- Reporting and communication
- Contact among employees and with partners.

Information on HEKS Strategy 2008–2012:
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