

HEKS Strategy 2008–2012

Swiss
Interchurch
Aid





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Introduction

Swiss Interchurch Aid (HEKS) first developed a strategic plan in 2002; the plan described its envisaged objectives between 2003 and 2007. Many of these strategic aims have been achieved in the last five years. The aid organisation has raised its profile, concentrated its strengths, asserted its position and grown as well.

As a result, in many areas the new strategy can build upon what has been achieved so far, consolidate acknowledged strengths and, if necessary, develop them. However, the framework conditions and the environment in which the aid organisation moves are subject to constant changes. The present strategy paper describes the most important challenges of the coming years and identifies how these should be met.

Between autumn 2007 and spring 2008, the agency's Board of Trustees and its management body directors worked hard on the strategy for the years from 2008 to 2012.

In doing so it was possible to fall back on extensive preliminary work carried out by management teams and employees in individual fields. During the final phase the outline strategy was also submitted for comment to selected external parties from a wide variety of professional backgrounds.

The HEKS Board of Trustees adopted the strategic plan in its meeting held on 13 June 2008.

HEKS is continuing to concentrate on specific issues in the future, although it is placing a new focus on communication, quality, sustainability and assessment of the effectiveness of work performed. Moderate but continuous growth is also an aim over the coming years.

The next step is to get to grips with the planning of implementation, with particular attention being paid to the measurement of target achievement. It is important to develop qualitative and quantitative indicators, so that envisaged objectives may be monitored systematically.

Healthy ambition and the will to make things happen are of course essential for the achievement of strategic aims. At the same time, however, it is important to remember in all modesty that an aid organisation the size of HEKS can only make a modest contribution to the many national and international challenges. Nevertheless, this contribution is of vital significance to the numerous people for whom the support of HEKS means radical and lasting improvements in their living conditions. The employees of the aid organisation are committed to them out of Christian duty.

1. The Strategy at a Glance

HEKS positions itself as a Swiss Interchurch aid organisation. It maintains a close dialogue with the churches and supports them with their involvement in social and development policy. HEKS also sees its mandate as reaching a wide, non-church public. The major challenge of the coming years is to adopt a clear and convincing stance within the area of conflict between its church foundations and the expectations and demands made by non-church partners on a Christian aid agency.

The profile of HEKS, and therefore its own performance, rests on five cornerstones:

- > Swiss Interchurch Aid
- > Christian values and human rights
- > Focus areas of activities
- > Closeness to people
- > Professionalism and effectiveness

These five elements combine to form an independent, unmistakable profile, which is clearly distinct from other aid organisations.

The quintessence of Christian (foundation) values and the dignity of every human being are the core values upon which Christianity is founded. These also find their expression in universal human rights, in particular in the UN agreements on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

It is essential to focus on specific issues if we are to work as professionals in a complex world and embrace the latest trends from research and practice in selected fields.

International activities comprise three areas:

- > Development Cooperation
- > Humanitarian Aid
- > Interchurch Aid

HEKS development cooperation work concentrates on rural communities security, access to resources such as land or water, production, processing and marketing of agricultural products, income generation, fight for the rights of socially disadvantaged people, and on the promotion of peace and resolution of conflict.

Work in Switzerland focuses on the following issues:

- > Social integration of disadvantaged people (work, daily structures, accommodation and shelter, languages, intercultural mediation and translation, pre-school development)
- > Advocacy for the socially disadvantaged

HEKS is developing its own unmistakable style of communication both internally and externally, which is characterised by the following elements:

- > Comprehensibility
- > Closeness to, and dialogue with, people
- > Integrity
- > Practice-based

Christian Values
and
Human Rights





2. The Position of HEKS

2.1 Swiss Interchurch Aid

HEKS is a Swiss Interchurch aid organisation. The members of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches (SEK) give it the mandate, as described in the foundation statute and mission statement, for its work in Switzerland (refugee work, assistance to the underprivileged and public relations work) and internationally (interchurch aid, reconstruction aid in Europe, development cooperation in Africa, Asia and Latin America, emergency aid). The moment the strategic plan is passed, the SEK Board examines its outline and form in the light of this mandate. The strategy would be adjusted to take account of any amendments.

In the coming years HEKS is increasing its presence in parishes and raising its profile to seek stronger ties and greater proximity to the members of regional churches. HEKS employees engage in dialogue with them, support their involvement in social and development policy, and create opportunities to participate in projects and campaigns. In so doing, they keep to existing and established church structures (e.g. agencies specialising in ecumenism, mission and development cooperation).

Being anchored in the churches shapes those values that are at the heart of the work done by HEKS. The aid organisation makes an important contribution to fulfilling the pastoral mission of the regional churches. It seeks dialogue with them in respect of the form and direction of pastoral work in Switzerland. Ideally, the regional churches support HEKS both financially and technically, and allow it to use church infrastructures for its project work.

2.2 Values

HEKS is committed to greater humanity and justice in the world. The dignity of every human being lies at the centre of its commitment to disadvantaged sections of the population. This forms the basis of universal human rights and, for Christians, is expressed in the true love within the meaning of the Gospel. The work of HEKS is guided by the message of Jesus Christ and pursues the aims of the mission statement (justice), (peace) and (protection of creation).

As a church aid organisation, HEKS is conscious of the Christian roots of its commitment. Its work interprets the three foundational aspects of the Christian image of man:

- › Man is created by God. This gives rise to the inviolability of life. It is the basis of values such as respect for creation and being mindful of others.

- > Man is related to man, which means that all of life is interwoven. This gives rise to values such as solidarity and a duty to give aid unconditionally, regardless of religion, culture, gender, nationality or social status.
- > Man is man in all his fragility. This gives rise to the principle of reciprocity of all aid. It is the basis of values such as participation and sense of community.

On the basis of these values HEKS does not work together with movements that link the acceptance of assistance with a specific statement of faith. People who are not part of the life of a faith community should also be able to identify with Christian service to fellow human beings or benefit from the support of HEKS.

The rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN agreements on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, are also groundbreaking. HEKS constantly endeavours to ensure that people know their rights and are in a position to claim them. It strives to ensure that all people can live in dignity, take responsibility for shaping their own lives and not be dependent on aid programmes.

The values by which HEKS is guided shape its practical work at home and internationally, as well as the aid organisation's organisational culture.

2.3 Key Aspects of Activities

In the coming years HEKS will raise its profile as an aid organisation focusing on specific issues with which the public at large can identify. Expertise will be consolidated, developed and made visible to the public for projects in the following areas:

- > Development cooperation with the focus on (development of rural communities) and (contributions towards the promotion of peace and conflict resolution) (internationally)
- > Humanitarian aid (internationally)
- > Interchurch aid (internationally)
- > Social integration (in Switzerland)
- > Advocacy for the socially disadvantaged (in Switzerland)

Sections 3 and 4 explain in detail what this means both at home and internationally.

Humanitarian aid: Internationally HEKS provides humanitarian aid after natural and environmental disasters, and during or after armed conflicts. In so doing, it focuses on emergency aid as well as reconstruction and rehabilitation.



2.4 Close to People

HEKS seeks to be close to people in all areas of its work and remains in dialogue with beneficiaries of programmes and projects, with partner organisations, with institutional backers, with donors, with members of regional Protestant churches and with the wider population. The aim is to make the organisation's work clear and understandable. However, closeness to people also means letting them take part in the actual work on behalf of the socially disadvantaged wherever possible.

2.5 Professionalism and Effectiveness

Employee expertise in central issues, the level of achievement in programmes and projects, the results of such achievements and the monitoring of project progress and use of resources are the benchmarks of professionalism for HEKS. Another important aspect of professionalism, however, is evidence that the guiding principles described in each section are reflected in the actual work done at home and internationally.

HEKS pays particular regard to sustained effectiveness and improved performance measurement all the way from the conception of programmes and projects to their evaluation.

HEKS rises to the challenge of increased professionalism and reporting on the part of aid organisations both nationally and internationally, and strives to set its own standards in specific areas.

3. International Work

3.1 Challenges and Framework Conditions

The greatest challenge in international cooperation is likely to remain the fight against poverty for the foreseeable future. This issue is central to UN millennium goals. Its core aim is to give as wide a range of the population as possible access to land, water, natural resources, education, health and income. Development work in rural communities in particular should promote self-determination and protect livelihoods.

In future years up-and-coming economic powers such as China or India will expand their commitment to development cooperation. Previous experience here shows that they do not always adhere to the same values as many of the development partners in the north. The observance of, and demand for, human rights often play a secondary role in south-south assistance for example. Aid organisations from northern countries will therefore have to increasingly deal with players who act according to different values, criteria and principles.

Evidence of the effectiveness of development cooperation and humanitarian aid will be a major challenge over the coming years. There are no simple, generally accepted methods of producing such evidence. Understanding the often complex and complicated interplay of power and influence entails laborious checks.

As a result, aid organisations and government departments will have to intensify their collective efforts to carry out reliable and meaningful analyses of the efficacy of their interventions if they are to convincingly counter some of the recent strong criticism of the whole purpose of development work.

The question of security and the political stability of countries constitute framework conditions that will gain increasing significance in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. It is not just a matter of the safety of the population, but also of ensuring that armed conflicts and power struggles do not jeopardise the sustainability of progress and of what has been accomplished.

In more recent times the public has become more aware of climate change as a pressing problem. Southern nations will be severely affected by climatic changes in the long run. As well as combating the causes of global climate changes, development work must give due regard to the protection of the environment by, for instance, purposely using environmentally friendly technologies and methods. It must be borne in mind that climate change is producing an increased incidence of natural disasters and, therefore, ever greater challenges for humanitarian assistance. The need for efficient and professional humanitarian aid will rise; it will be in the media and public spotlight and will have to prove to a wide audience that it can respond quickly, effectively and reliably when people are hit by a natural catastrophe.

Aid organisations that want to provide humanitarian aid must have qualified and experienced staff, if wanting to respond rapidly and precisely, cooperation with efficient local partner organisations will become increasingly important, as will operations in networks and alliances. The requirements for reporting and accounting on relief actions will rise.

3.2 Development Cooperation

3.2.1 Principles

In the planning and implementation of projects and programmes HEKS abides by the following generally accepted principles:

Participation: Population groups participate in decisions relating to the planning and implementation of projects being carried out on their behalf.

Partnership: Projects are implemented by, or with the involvement of, local partner organisations (e.g. authorities, companies, church and other civilian organisations, lobbyists for underprivileged groups).

Sustainability: What is achieved in development cooperation projects must endure once personnel and financial support from international backers has been withdrawn.

Empowerment: Development cooperation also empowers underprivileged groups to articulate their interests, to engage in political debate and to demand their rights. At the same time it makes people aware of their responsibilities towards the community.

Gender Equality: Equality between the sexes is of central importance in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. Men and women (boys and girls) should have equal access to resources (e.g. personal loans, education), demand their rights and meet their obligations to the community.

Do no Harm: Development cooperation projects ensure that no harm is caused to the beneficiaries.

3.2.2 Key Aspects of Activity

HEKS adopts a holistic approach in its projects and programmes, which takes into consideration the multi-faceted aspects of development cooperation. The aim of interventions is the sustainable improvement in the living conditions of disadvantaged people. As a rule, HEKS sees its work as a long-term commitment, which includes networking and sponsorship of local partner organisations. The specification of development objectives is based as much on extensive, in-depth analyses of local circumstance as on the latest findings from practice and research. The necessary staffing and financial resources are provided for deployment in HEKS projects.

Development of rural communities: HEKS supports rural communities – and isolated groups in densely populated urban areas – in their efforts towards self-determination and a secure livelihood. HEKS 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.

Contributions to promotion of peace and conflict resolution: HEKS is active in numerous regions where conflicts have taken or are still taking place. As a result, the working environment is often characterised by varying forms of violence (structural, armed, domestic violence etc.). The utmost importance is attached to early identification and avoidance or handling of potential conflicts in project work.

HEKS implements special projects dealing exclusively with the promotion of peace and conflict resolution, which are based on its Christian principles and understanding of the value of interfaith dialogue. These help to identify the causes of violence, to develop measures to prevent it, and to protect against, or overcome it.

HEKS concentrates on initiatives that promote peace in a local or regional context, as the primary role of its aid work cannot be to mediate at national level or between states. However, where the opportunity arises, HEKS also works for the promotion of peace in concert with other civilian contributors at supra-regional level.

If HEKS-backed programmes and projects are to be enduringly effective, it is crucial that communities learn how to defend themselves adequately against injustice and to fight for their rights. HEKS is committed to doing this (advocacy) for socially disadvantaged groups, supporting them in the battle for their due rights through education and integration. This can also lead to confrontational situations with state and para-state organisations.

When programmes and projects are implemented, the demand for a global approach in development cooperation inevitably highlights specialist areas and issues other than those mentioned, for instance education, HIV/Aids, climate change, micro-economy, migration, develop-

Focus Areas
of
Activities





ment and more. If issues exist outside its remit, HEKS buys in know-how according to need, or liaises with partners capable of supplying the required expertise and experience.

In future HEKS will also be monitoring the environmental friendliness of its programmes and projects. As it is not the intention to focus on a particular issue in this field, cooperation will be stepped up with organisations in possession of the relevant expertise.

3.2.3 Geographical Concentration and Target Groups

The concentration of our resources in selected countries or regions enables local partner organisations to network together and become more effective, favours the exchange of knowledge and experience, and keeps down expenditure on controlling and reporting. Support is not given to individual, isolated projects, which are very sporadic and limited in their effectiveness or just go up in smoke. When it comes to national programmes, the emphasis is far more on a network of projects and local organisations, which releases the power to do something about the causes of poverty and injustice.

When choosing focus countries, HEKS abides primarily by the following criteria: country-specific or regional political and socio-economic factors, needs of the population, development potential of a country or region, key issues in line with strategy, possibilities of funding programmes and projects.

The target groups reached by HEKS projects are rural populations and some individual communities in densely populated urban areas. True to the course pursued by HEKS, disenfranchised people, members of minority groups, women and young people take centre stage.

3.2.4 Working Methods

The global approach of development policy at HEKS (empowerment of beneficiaries to determine their living conditions effectively, independently and with dignity) means that the development and implementation of programmes and projects happen close to, and together with, the population. Experience shows that this is most successful when small, local partner organisations rooted in the population do the work on the spot. As a rule, these are supported, coordinated and monitored by a regional HEKS representative.

Local partner organisations are selected in accordance with the following criteria: closeness to the beneficiaries, proven management expertise or the potential to acquire it, specialist knowledge of key HEKS issues, and agreement with HEKS basic values and working principles.

At the same time, HEKS understands the emancipatory partnership approach to working as a joint process of negotiation with regard to the contents, implementation, evaluation and financial controlling of programmes and projects. This also includes exchanging controversial viewpoints and grappling with effective solutions. Many years of experience in some thirty countries ensure that HEKS is in a position to contribute its specific know-how in key issues and draw up strategic goals for activities in a region or a country.

3.3 Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian aid is central to HEKS international work. HEKS has qualified staff working exclusively in humanitarian aid, in order to ensure the necessary professionalism and swift action. If necessary, it also has recourse to a pool of experienced experts who can be deployed ad hoc in the event of disasters. HEKS sets aside a considerable portion of its budget for humanitarian aid to safeguard and develop the necessary know-how in the long term.

HEKS contributes humanitarian aid after natural and environmental disasters, and during or after armed conflicts. In essence, the same basic principles and working methods apply to humanitarian aid as to development cooperation. This attaches particular significance to the development and cultivation of partnerships with local organisations, which are quick to intervene in the event of a catastrophe and can, if necessary, also pursue the concerns of development cooperation in the longer term. As regards content, specific focal points will arise, which can differ according to the nature of the emergency and local circumstances.

As a relatively small aid agency by international standards, HEKS can only meet the requirements for professionalism and quality by setting clear priorities for its humanitarian aid. When under intense pressure from the media in the aftermath of a natural disaster, this approach ensures that the quality of project work is always at the forefront and that media coverage of a disaster is not a sufficient reason in itself to launch humanitarian aid projects.

A global approach is adopted in those HEKS focus countries and regions where there is a high likelihood of disasters occurring. Humanitarian aid from HEKS covers four areas here:

- > being ready for possible disasters (preparedness), which includes risk analyses, early-warning systems and operational readiness for a catastrophic event
- > emergency aid (e.g. distribution of relief, provision of emergency shelters)
- > reconstruction (e.g. community housing and infrastructures) and rehabilitation (e.g. income aid)
- > disaster and conflict prevention (e.g. constructional and agronomic measures, prevention or de-escalation of conflicts)

At the same time, methods of intervention are always guided by the specific needs of the population, and depend on the skills of local partner organisations and on opportunities to procure resources in the wake of media coverage of an incident.

HEKS concentrates on emergency aid, reconstruction and rehabilitation in HEKS focus countries at low risk of catastrophe and in specific non-focus countries.

Advocacy for socially disadvantaged people: Within Switzerland HEKS in particular supports asylum seekers and refugees in claiming their due rights. It also provides legal advice for the socially disadvantaged.



3.4 Interchurch Aid

Interchurch aid represents the third pillar of HEKS international work, alongside development cooperation and humanitarian aid. It focuses on two areas: support for members of the Ecumenical Council of Churches (ÖRK) outside Switzerland, and assistance for Swiss Reformed church congregations in the development of partnerships with international congregations.

In countless countries the work done by church communities has a significant impact on developments within civilian society. HEKS supports, advises, sponsors and mentors their work in diaconal projects and programmes and in building up the church to this end.

The strengthening of partner churches and church organisations is an essential prerequisite of effective project work. The basic principles and working methods of development cooperation also apply in this sphere of work. This means, for instance, that HEKS understands interchurch aid as an ecumenical, interfaith and intercultural activity that seeks sustainable improvements in the living conditions of socially disadvantaged groups of people. Closeness to the beneficiaries is crucial to the planning and implementation of projects. The aim is, therefore, to support churches by means of actual projects to make them more socially, ecumenically and pastorally effective. HEKS sees church structures as locally established organisations, which are in a position to shape and promote the development of society.

As far as this aspect of interchurch aid is concerned, the direction to be taken in terms of contents, issues and geographical locations (almost exclusively Europe until now) will need to be jointly clarified over the coming years with church partners in Switzerland and internationally. Standards of management, reporting and controlling are to be monitored in parallel to development cooperation.

The second area of interchurch aid relates to the support of Swiss church congregations wishing to develop partnerships with international congregations. HEKS sets up contacts, provides know-how and, if required, advises on and helps to decide what form the actual cooperation should take.

4. Work in Switzerland

4.1 Challenges and Framework Conditions

One of the greatest social challenges facing Switzerland in the coming years is the integration of socially disadvantaged people into society and working life. It is difficult for people with migratory backgrounds and, increasingly, for socially disadvantaged Swiss citizens to find their place in society. It has become harder for people with educational deficits, a lack of training, problems of understanding or impaired health to achieve a secure livelihood.

In recent times, social cohesion has been crumbling amidst the heated debate on integration and the abuse of the social security system. Those concerned are increasingly uninsured and fear social exclusion. This is neither to the advantage of the individual nor in the interests of society. The feeling of not belonging and being unable to participate in the life of society increases the risk of tensions or even violence, and threatens social cohesion. Accordingly, the great challenge is to counteract this marginalisation with constructive, inclusive dialogue and concrete measures.

In the run-up to political debates and referenda in recent years, HEKS has fought against the tightening of asylum and immigration laws. These were conceived in the breeding ground of an undiscerning rejection of people from different cultures, and serious questions have hung over their compatibility with human rights. It will become all the more important for asylum seekers and refugees to be aware of their due rights and to be given a fair hearing in compliance with statutory guidelines. Should legal interpretation prove to be unacceptably rigid or human rights be violated, there is a call for aid organisations that specialise in the area of asylum.

It is becoming apparent that, as a consequence of new legislation, state regulatory structures are implementing measures on the integration of foreigners as far as possible. Private aid organisations must be clear, therefore, where and how they want to work in future. Their opportunities may lie in offering what the state itself is not willing or able to provide, such as projects in which aid agencies may assume the role of mediator between beneficiaries and government departments.

The implementation of the NFA (new financial equalisation scheme) has shifted skills, responsibility and funding from the Federation to the cantons, which will in turn lead to further changes in the socio-political landscape over the coming years. As the cantons receive considerably more room for manoeuvre, cantonal differences in terms of integration policy and the resources provided for this purpose will become highlighted. Even a nationally active aid organisation such as HEKS will have to adapt first and foremost to framework conditions in the relevant canton or region.

Aid organisations will now enter into competition with one another to win mandates and contracts from public bodies. The quality of services rendered plays just as important a role as price here. Whilst HEKS will face up to the pressures of price and competition, it will insist on fair



Interchurch aid: HEKS supports, advises, sponsors and mentors the work of international church congregations in diaconal projects and programmes. It helps Swiss church congregations to set up partnerships with international congregations.

and transparent conditions for the awarding of contracts and not become involved in the sort of competition that would be ruinous for private organisations and their employees.

4.2 Principles

The following principles apply to the planning and implementation of programmes and projects:

Empowerment: All people should determine their own lives and be able to take responsibility for their decisions. At the same time, it is important to take account of the fact that their individual requirements, capabilities and assets are very different.

Rights and responsibilities: Social integration is a two-way, multi-layered process. HEKS supports socially disadvantaged people in their efforts to integrate into Swiss society. At the same time, it expects them to adapt and to fulfil social and legal obligations.

Participation: The needs of beneficiaries are clarified and taken into consideration when setting up and expanding new and existing provision. At the same time HEKS relies on findings from studies and on the knowledge and experience of specialist agencies and authorities. Evaluation studies conduct surveys relating to programmes and projects among participants and awarding bodies alike. Their feedback constitutes an important foundation for the further development of provision.

Gender equality: In its commitment to integration and equality of opportunities HEKS puts great emphasis on equal treatment of the sexes. Men and women should have the same level of access to work, training and social and cultural life in Switzerland.

Conflict handling: Conflicts should be identified early and addressed constructively in programmes and projects. In this way HEKS makes a contribution to conflict prevention and the non-violent handling of conflicts.

4.3 Focus areas

The issues and geographical locations covered by the work of HEKS have undergone considerable expansion in recent years. In the coming years it is important to consolidate what has been achieved, increase professional know-how in both of the following focus areas and implement successful projects in as many HEKS regions as possible.

Social integration: The work done by HEKS contributes to the social integration of disadvantaged people and, consequently, to social cohesion in Switzerland. In broad terms of social integration, this entails an emphasis on programmes and projects aimed at integration into employment or a structured working day, the provision of housing and shelter, language acquisition, intercultural mediation or translation, pre-school early-years development for children and associated work with the parents.

Advocacy for the socially disadvantaged: HEKS provides legal support for people to claim their rights, with the main focus on legal advice for asylum seekers and refugees. Over the coming years this service will be extended to socially disadvantaged Swiss and migrants with the aim of empowering them to stand up for their own rights.

HEKS specifically develops its core competencies in these two areas, tests out innovative project approaches in practical situations, reviews the latest findings from practice and research, and then provides the necessary staffing and financial resources to implement these in actual programmes and projects relating to the key issues.

HEKS will also track social trends and, if necessary, develop new provision outside the focus areas.

4.4 Target Groups

It is well-nigh impossible to coin clear and conclusive definitions of specific target groups within what is loosely termed (socially disadvantaged people), but various problem areas frequently overlap in practice. It is of pressing importance that key issues and target groups are combined for the activities of HEKS.

People with no independent means of existence: This group includes Swiss as well as people from other countries of origin. They do not earn enough income from employment to support themselves, or they are dependent on benefits and social security. HEKS supports their integration back into working life, thus helping them to earn an independent living. If they lack the necessary resources to earn sufficient income from employment, HEKS makes provision for them in terms of housing, shelter and a structured working day.

Profession-
Professionalism

Professionalism
and
Effectiveness

and
Effectiveness
effectiveness





People with a migration background: This group also includes, but not exclusively, people in the above category. Their integration into society can be further hampered by not knowing the language, a lack of understanding of Swiss culture and thus being at a disadvantage in the labour market. HEKS supports their integration into a Swiss environment.

The sans-papiers are a specific group of migrants. They are not officially authorised to be in Switzerland, often hold badly paid jobs and live a precarious existence. HEKS champions their human dignity, and helps them with the assertion of what few rights they have and with their efforts to gain legal resident status.

Asylum seekers/refugees: In principle, HEKS seeks to cooperate with government departments in matters relating to asylum seekers and refugees. At the same time, however, HEKS advocates the rights and human dignity of asylum seekers and refugees, which can lead to the aid organisation and said departments ending up on opposing sides.

4.5 Geographical Footholds

As far as its work in Switzerland is concerned, HEKS keeps to a decentralised structure of regional offices and the Secrétariat Romand. Although there are currently no plans to expand into additional regions, this may be reviewed if the need arises. An exchange of know-how between the regional offices is encouraged, the aim being to implement successful programmes of proven quality in as many HEKS regions as possible.

The decentralised structure also promotes closeness to local and regional working partners and facilitates regular contact with church representatives.

5. Public Relations Work

5.1 Challenges and Framework Conditions

The battle to gain the attention of the wider public has heated up over the past few years. The competition for media coverage among aid organisations is also strong. At the same time, the media are interested not only in reporting on positive issues but, more than anything, in exposing problems or even scandals. As a result, those on the receiving end of criticism quickly find themselves on the defensive, if they fail to give an honest account of their difficulties at an early stage. Dealing with public criticism is a major challenge for aid organisations.

There is a clear-cut trend towards human-interest stories rather than a factual representation of situations. Readers are emotionally touched by the fortunes of others, and demand for such stories is high. When reports are so highly personalised aid organisations must ensure the authenticity of the people being described.

Media reporting ranges from background journalism and foreign correspondence through to coverage of celebrities or of regional and local events. This trend makes it more difficult to communicate international activities through the media, although it does open up new opportunities to present locally established work at home. Working with well-known personalities as ambassadors for projects and values has gained in importance.

The increasing focus on a few large media houses, which exercise strong regional dominance, and the dramatic growth of free newspapers constitute an additional challenge for public relations work. Consumer behaviour is changing in the light of the growing profusion of new Internet media. People use a variety of media formats to access essential information quickly, a service that is fast becoming a reality of everyday life. The only way for HEKS to get its messages across effectively in this tide of information is to communicate via several channels at once, rapidly, coherently, to the point and close to the people.

Communication costs are expected to rise as a result. What matters for HEKS is that public relations work remains truthful, credible and efficient, and that its effectiveness is carefully evaluated.

5.2 High Profile

HEKS consistently aligns its communications work to the five pillars of its public profile (church aid, Christian values and human rights, key issues, closeness to people and professionalism). The profile of HEKS visibly and tangibly embodies the values that characterise this aid organisation.

It also strives for healthy cooperation with churches and other aid organisations. At the same time, HEKS values its independence, which sets it clearly and distinctly apart from competitors and their concerns. In this way the activities of HEKS should be more readily recognised and a public profile be established outside the window of time provided for fundraising. The name of HEKS is clearly highlighted in communications. A clear presence also has an impact among

other aid organisations run by Protestant churches, and leads to a review of certain working partnerships and means and channels of communication.

The aims of intensive, focused communication are a concise presentation of the activities of HEKS to a wider public, clarity for donors as to the use of funds, a significant increase in supported and unsupported levels of familiarity with HEKS and consequently a stronger starting position for fundraising.

5.3 Communication Style

Internal and external communication by HEKS is an important factor in raising the aid organisation's profile. An individual, unmistakable communication style has been developed for this purpose. This is characterised by the following elements:

Comprehensibility: HEKS communicates the complex and manifold activities of the aid organisation in simple, clear and comprehensible language accessible to non-experts.

Dialogue with people: HEKS seeks partnership dialogue, exchange and discussion not only in its national and international work, but also in communications with donors and institutional backers. These should also highlight critical aspects of the work done by HEKS in order to promote an understanding of the often difficult framework conditions and unhelpful influences on programmes and projects. HEKS builds specific communication channels to enter into an engaged dialogue with those interested in its work and involve them in concrete action.

Integrity: HEKS communicates openly and truthfully about its work. It is honest in its criticism of problems and setbacks. Such transparency strengthens the public's confidence in its activities and consolidates the image of a plausible aid agency.

Practice-related: Relation to practice is noticeable in HEKS communications. HEKS stands not only for theoretical concepts, but also for their implementation in actual programmes and projects. The experience gathered in the process is a distinct element in communications, giving expression to the grassroots (down-to-earth) approach of HEKS.

5.4 Target Groups and Instruments

Its public relations work helps HEKS on the one hand to realise its mandate to sensitise and inform an interested public. However, it is also central to positioning the aid agency in the public eye and increasing levels of awareness.

Integrated campaigns are a key instrument in achieving these aims. They enable HEKS to bring clear and concise messages to the public and to donors several times a year, and to reach people through several channels quickly, directly and effectively.

A further target group for public relations work are people – particularly from a church background – who already support HEKS materially or in its ideals. HEKS would like to enter into greater dialogue with these people, make them aware of issues and concerns and tell them about its wide-ranging activities so as to strengthen its foothold in the church and its connections to church foundations. With this target group HEKS can also use its own instruments of communication (website, magazine etc.) to present considered counter-arguments against mainstream media publicity.

Public relations work must take account of changing media and consumer behaviour. New media and rapid communication via different channels are becoming increasingly important. HEKS is developing its tools of communication accordingly. This requires investment, which must nevertheless remain within the limit stipulated in the total budget. There are guidelines for the deployment of resources and the aims of public relations work.

5.5 Information in Switzerland

The church mandate of public relations work specifically includes fearlessly and publicly championing the cause of socially disadvantaged people. HEKS gives them a voice and, in so doing, does not shy away from confrontational situations. The aims are to foster understanding among Swiss people of the challenges of development work, humanitarian aid and social integration in Switzerland, and to take a stand with regard to the legal rights of socially disadvantaged people.

6. Fundraising

6.1 Challenges and Framework Conditions

Competition for donations has become more intense. International organisations with large advertising resources are pushing into the lucrative Swiss market for charitable giving. ZEWO regulations now provide greater flexibility in the collection of donations, so that ZEWO organisations, which until the end of 2006 were only granted a national collection period of two weeks, are no longer disadvantaged. Professional fundraising and the deployment of resources for this purpose will increase as the pressure of competition grows.

Intensified competition makes it harder to win new donors. The most effective approach now proves to be taking special care of regular givers. Loyal support from churches is a central prop for HEKS, since it guarantees a considerable portion of annual income from donations. Efforts in this area will be further increased.

Nevertheless, medium-term planning must allow for a shortage of financial resources from cantonal churches and congregations coupled with a decline in people's ties with the church. There is a danger that the regular church donor base will shrink. If HEKS is to attain its desired targets for growth, therefore, it must also win new donors outside church bodies in future.

6.2 Ethical Guidelines

HEKS adheres to the principles of integrity, ethics, cost-effectiveness and transparency in matters of fundraising.

There is due compliance with statutory principles and accepted standards, which require communication to be truthful, factual and without exaggeration. The purpose of collections is clearly explained. The dignity of the people who are to benefit from the collected funds is respected, as are the freedom, wishes and interests of donors. The latter are regularly and openly informed as to how the funds are used and what has been achieved with them.

In gaining new donors, HEKS also pledges to forego the services of commercial providers as far as possible, and to ensure fairness in the competition with non-profit organisations. As the battle between rivals heats up, the emphasis will be on innovative ideas and actions allied to open dialogue with responsible donors, rather than on lurid, cliché-ridden or even discriminatory communications.

HEKS stipulates the proportion of the total budget to be used for fundraising, and applies this efficiently and purposefully.

6.3 Target Groups and Instruments

HEKS wishes to expand its share of the market for charitable giving and be cost-conscious in its fundraising operations. The necessary financial resources are being built up and used more selectively. Every year several campaigns are run to raise its profile in public and among donors. In the short term, of course, this will mean a further rise in the amount spent by HEKS to bring in

Social integration: With its projects in the areas of occupational integration, shelter, language acquisition and pre-school development HEKS makes an important contribution in Switzerland towards the social integration of disadvantaged population groups.



donations. Given the greater pressure of competition, however, this is the only way to attain desired growth targets in the long-term.

Stepping up the dialogue with givers from church backgrounds should ensure firmly established sponsorship for HEKS, increase contacts with church-based people and secure long-term funding from this segment. As far as winning new donors outside the church is concerned, fundraising methods are being developed and refined with new approaches. Changing media and consumer habits must be taken into account in the same way as in public relations work. More fundraising is done through campaigns, which make simultaneous use of different channels of communication. It is also well worth taking note of new media, such as the Internet. As in its public relations work, fundraising by HEKS consistently adheres to the guidelines of profile-raising and communication style. This consolidates the position and credibility of the aid organisation and, ultimately, the effectiveness of its communications.

Greater cooperation in the funding of programme and project work is being sought with trusts, as long as their goals are in agreement with key issues for HEKS. It is also intended to look into business partnerships based on clear criteria. The point of this, quite apart from tapping into financial resources, is to make companies aware of development and social policy issues.

Finally, HEKS is hoping for an increase in contributions from the state. This can take the form of contributions for projects or the transfer of mandates. With institutional partners it is a matter of being perceived as a competent and reliable aid agency providing high-quality services.

HEKS stipulates what proportion of the total budget is available for fundraising and public relations work every year. There are guidelines on the desired mix and on growth targets for the various types of fundraising. Greater attention is being given to targeted fundraising for projects at home.

Closeness
Closeness
to
People
to
People
People





7. Alliances and Networks

The involvement of HEKS in church-based and other alliances and networks rests on two central planks:

- Programmes and projects are implemented within the framework of networks or mergers from several organisations.
- Effective lobbying on behalf of socially disadvantaged people is done in unison with other organisations and is strengthened as a result.

Essential criteria for involvement in networks and alliances are therefore: conformity to guidelines and strategy of HEKS, potential of influence for HEKS, effectiveness and efficiency of the overall alliance in the areas of project implementation or lobbying, proportion of expenditure by HEKS (personnel and financial) in relation to effectiveness, provision of additional sources of funding, and alliance stands for causes that HEKS cannot adequately support in its own strength.

The development of methods to analyse the effectiveness of programmes and projects both in Switzerland and internationally, targeted access to lacking know-how, tapping into additional channels of fundraising and solidarity with the causes of key working partners are further factors that play a role in the involvement of HEKS in national and international alliances and networks.

Over the coming years all current HEKS involvement in alliances and networks will be reviewed in the light of the above-mentioned criteria.

HEKS counts the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and SWISS SOLIDARITY among its key partners. The focus is on professional exchanges with them and close cooperation in the implementation of programmes and projects using resources from both partners.

8. Organisation

8.1 Corporate Governance

HEKS is committed to the principles of responsible leadership, control and communication (corporate governance), as defined in the Swiss NPO Code, and to the rules and standards of ZEW0. This equips it to meet the manifold demands of working partners, institutional backers, donors and church bodies.

8.2 Secrétariat Romand

HEKS is a Swiss aid organisation with a nationwide presence. HEKS runs a Secrétariat Romand to achieve its strategic aims and provides a permanent base for the agency in western Switzerland.

This is responsible for the development, planning, implementation and funding of projects in the French-speaking cantons. It is in charge of targeted fundraising in French-speaking Switzerland and, to do so, relies on a market analysis produced in relation to the present strategy. It organises public relations work and communications in the Romandy, making use of its proximity to French-speaking media. Finally, particular importance is attached to networking with working partners and church bodies.

8.3 Personnel

HEKS can only perform this wide range of services to the required high standards if it is able to rely on a motivated, professionally qualified workforce deployed in line with its abilities. Managers express their appreciation of employees openly and clearly. The values that set the aid agency apart are also reflected in employees' dealings with one another. As an employer HEKS expects staff to identify with these values, and it fosters a corporate culture in which they are lived out. Further requirements are shared strategic aims, a high degree of motivation and open dialogue about the achievement of agreed performance targets.

HEKS cultivates professionalism in employees by supporting further training with the help of clear criteria. Staff should be sufficiently qualified to fulfil the duties assigned to them to the best of their abilities, to remain employable in the longer term and to be able to plan their future career. Working conditions should allow employees to strike a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives, protect them from excessive demands and workloads, and maintain the lowest possible risk that the situation in the workplace may have a detrimental effect on their health.

HEKS attaches real value to the promotion and support of employees with managerial responsibilities. They are particularly important in setting a positive tone in the workplace and in accomplishing strategic aims.

By studying management guidelines they develop a common understanding of leadership, plan and supervise the implementation of strategic targets and are in a position to deal competently and fairly with interpersonal conflicts in the workplace.

Development of rural communities: The development cooperation work done by HEKS supports rural communities in their efforts towards self-determination and securing livelihoods.



HEKS operates a pay policy based on the evaluation and grading of individual roles, aligned to the employment market as and when required, and which rewards achievement. HEKS can only match current salaries in the commercial sector for low-paid workers. It lines up with the medium salary levels of aid organisations of a similar size. The merger of jobs in the same locality in Zurich should enhance cooperation between the individual departments and, as a result, corporate culture.

8.4 Financial Planning

HEKS uses the funds available to it carefully, selectively and effectively. It respects the willingness to give by earmarking all incoming funds to ensure they are used correctly.

HEKS aims for continuous growth in its income and always keeps adequate financial reserves. It sets different growth targets for home and internationally and for the Secrétariat Romand.

In the light of poverty worldwide, a fundamental concern of HEKS must be to increase its income to make more resources available to alleviate hardship. Moderate and continuous growth is also essential to offset anticipated price rises. As other aid organisations have grown, and will continue to grow, in the same way over the last few years, to stand still is to cede importance and influence. In future more funds will have to be allocated to communication and to quality development and assurance. The necessary basic groundwork in HEKS focus areas also has to be expanded to stay ahead in professional terms. This extra expenditure is expressed as administration costs. Moderate growth allows these to be kept low in relation to overall outgoings.

The strategic control of finances is done with the help of guide values to which budgeting and accounting must adhere. The allocation of free (i.e. uncommitted) funds is in line with the strategic aims.

In principle, the funds required to implement the strategy – particularly for the anticipated rise in wage costs based on growth targets – must be allocated within the regular annual budget. This does not apply to costs incurred by fundraising measures, for the implementation of which it is possible to fall back on reserves outside the established guide values.

Important tasks over the coming years will be the development of controlling in projects internationally and the introduction of an internal monitoring system in line with new legislation. At the same time, the new controlling concept from HEKS for activities abroad will also fulfil the requirements of important backers in Switzerland (SWISS SOLIDARITY and SDC).

The Board of Trustees determines the strategic guidelines and principles of the aid organisation's investment policy in the rules of procedure on assets.

8.5 Quality Management

In addition to ZEWO approval, the whole HEKS organisation is seeking certification in compliance with NPO Label VMI. The aim is for the various projects in Switzerland that can be officially approved, such as those in the areas of training, addiction treatment services or integration into employment, to be newly or re-certified.

When it comes to quality management, HEKS places great value on lean processes and is introducing improvement management, which systematically analyses identified errors and works out the measures required. HEKS is also conducting internal and external audits in selected departments. The purpose of these measures is to improve the aid organisation's cost-effectiveness and, in turn, to use donations as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Finally, HEKS is gradually bringing in knowledge management over the next few years, which promotes the exchange of knowledge and experience between staff and thus raises the quality of services rendered.

Monitoring for the purpose of reviewing project aims and their attainment is being developed. Evaluation studies will also be carried out in specific departments by external experts in future.

9. Implementation and Controlling

Individual departments draw up concrete plans for the implementation of strategic guidelines and controlling, all of which give regular information on the achievement of stated objectives. The definition of measurable performance targets, the clear identification of basic values as at the end of 2007 and the establishment of further indicators to monitor strategic target achievement are part of implementation planning.



Peace Promotion: In the context of its international work HEKS contributes towards the promotion of peace as well as to the early diagnosis, prevention, handling and resolution of conflicts.

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