



MEAL – Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, Learning

HEKS/EPER Global Cooperation's strategy, promising practices, achievements and perspectives on evidence-based and results-oriented programming, monitoring, evaluation, learning, adaptation and mutual accountability.

Why MEAL Matters

Global trends and challenges – Context

The requirements for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) have steadily risen in the last decade. There is a critical view on the relevance and effectiveness of iNGOs' work, which resulted in increased, but distinctively different requirements of the general public, politics, media, institutional and private donors for NGOs to show results, progress and impact for accountability and learning, and steering purposes. This trend is an opportunity for NGOs to invest in MEAL, improve adaptive management, contribute with evidence to the Agenda 2030 and its central pledge of 'leaving no one behind', and adapt their own strategy and ways of implementation accordingly.

At the same time, the context of development cooperation and humanitarian aid in an increasingly complex and multipolar world is dynamic and sometimes contradictory. This makes it difficult to illustrate and analyse progress and understandably. Recent global trends such as digitalisation, private donor engagement, the GPEDC¹, the pledge for impact investing, financial returns and value for money have influenced how NGOs, governments and donors understand MEAL. For many years, there has been significant pressure for rigorous impact measurement, such as Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) or contribution analysis, to assess the impact of the development or humanitarian actor compared to external effects. However, many donors, universities, research centres, think tanks, NGOs themselves, and slowly but steadily also State agencies, the UN or EU encourage more flexible approaches such as adaptive management and 'theory of change'-based approaches, which allow real-time analysis and course and logframe correction in the project and programme steering.

A trend picked up by HEKS/EPER in 2017 with its genuine global digital data collection and analysis tool (HEKS/EPER Key Indicator System) is now spreading across contexts of International Cooperation – digitised data management systems allowing to follow on project, country or global level achievements serving accountability but also to foster evidence-based programming oriented towards tangible results. This trend is bearing some challenges with different institutional donors building up their own digital indicator system, pressuring iNGOs to master parallelly different ICT tools and indicators, and making piles of data difficult to analyse.



Interviews with project participants assessing with the HKI 'Income' the progress of a project in Cambodia.

How HEKS/EPER responds to global trends and challenges – MEAL strategy

The international programme (HIP 21-24) sets the global vision and a results framework to which country programmes and projects contribute with their specific objectives. Each level manages its planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, learning, steering/adaptation and reporting cycle. The Programme Cycle Management (PCM) sets clear responsibilities, timings and requirements. In the very complex and dynamic context of international cooperation, HEKS/EPER relies on a global MEL system based on four pillars marked by the four outcomes summarised in the graphic below:

The MEAL vision is ...

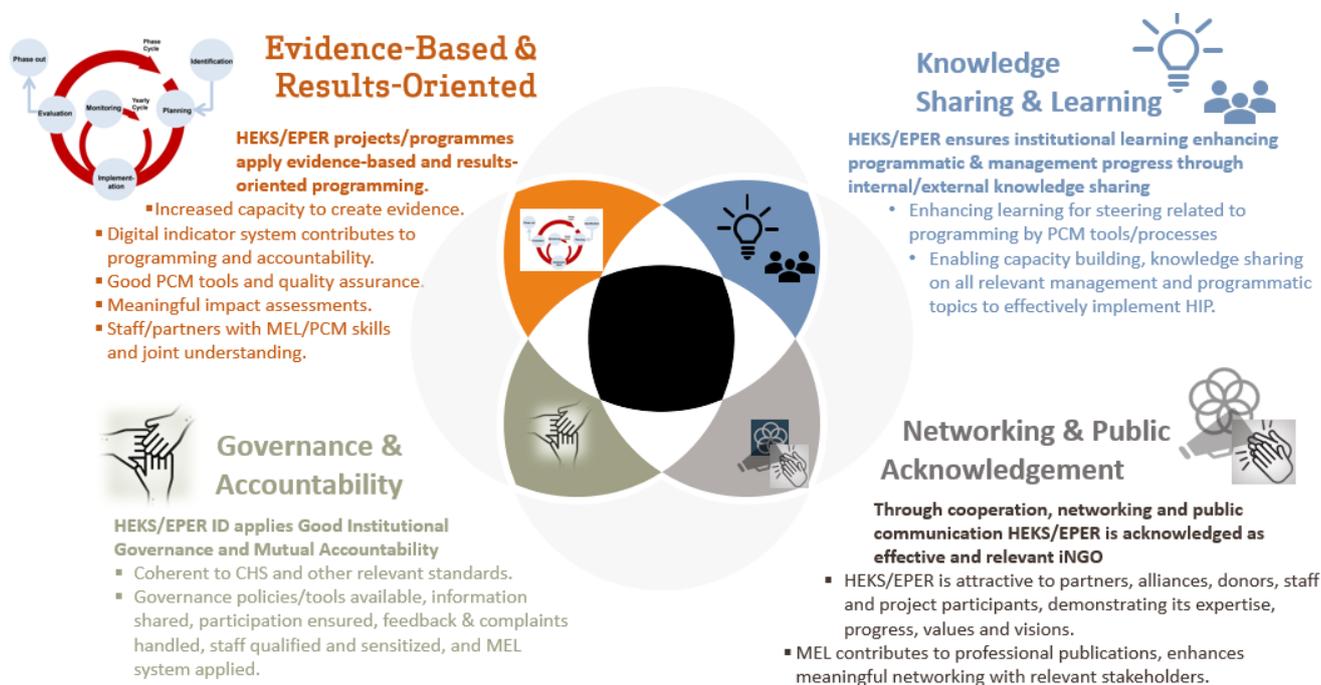
... to maintain and develop a high-quality MEL system and tools **promoting evidence-based and results-oriented programming and adaptive management**. The **Learning 4 Steering approach** allows for effective, relevant and high-quality HEKS/EPER International Programme implementation with the ultimate goal of covering the needs and fostering the participation of people and communities.

In addition, institutional efforts in the field of MEL foster **good institutional governance** and **mutual accountability**, demonstrate progress and impact and contribute to high acknowledgement by project participants, partners, civil society and donors as a professional and trustworthy organisation. HEKS/EPER participates in

¹ GPEDC: UN Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation: <http://effectivecooperation.org/>

networks and alliances to build and manage strategic cooperation to foster participation, knowledge-sharing and capacity-building and increase effectiveness, visibility, relevance and systemic change.

All HEKS/EPER programmes and projects are **planned** based on risk-informed, gender-sensitive context analysis and internal and external evidence to increase relevance, effectiveness, and success probability. During **implementation**, it is paramount to constantly observe, analyse, learn and adapt strategies and activities to the changing context to ensure progress and impact.



Overview on the 4 Outcomes of the MEL strategy 2020-2023.

HEKS/EPER's transparent reports serve **mutual accountability** towards donors, project participants and the public by documenting progress, effectiveness and sustainability. Reporting includes annual projects, country and global reports and annual thematic factsheets. This yearly review facilitates HEKS/EPER and its partners to constantly adapt their strategies and activities to maximise the benefit of the people and communities.

Once interventions have been running for a few years, internal and external specialists perform **evaluations** or comprehensive scientific **impact assessments** of key projects, programmes, topics or approaches to examine their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact. HEKS/EPER has a specific *evaluation policy* and *impact assessment policy* to understand the main changes and the contribution/attribution of HEKS/EPER. Evaluation and impact assessment reports, policy briefs and management responses are published, and evidence is included in the following phase or interventions in other contexts as appropriate.

Undertaking professional MEL needs time, resources and qualified staff and partners, both demonstrating ownership towards meaningful activities and skills thanks to internal training, external expertise and their own experience. IT systems and an approach of 'communication 4 development' shall provide instruments enabling data analysis, knowledge sharing and capacity building. The emphasis lies on digital and online tools to foster world-wide exchange and cooperation.

Promising MEAL Practices

Consolidation of HEKS/EPER key indicators digital data collection system and online platform

One of HEKS/EPER's essential elements of the global evidence base is the digital key indicators system. The real-time operating system is developed for digital data collection and analysis. The system assists in monitoring and measuring performance, demonstrates evidence-based results from projects and programmes, and improves efficiency and accountability on the project, country and global levels.

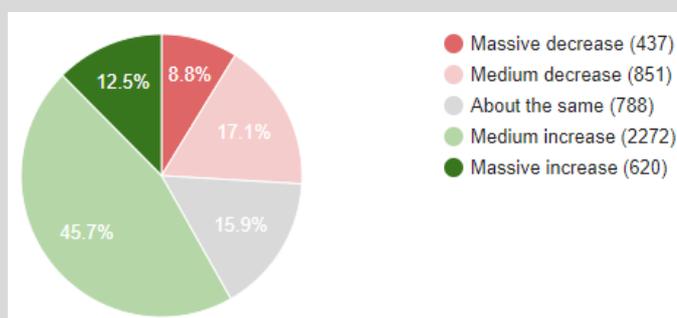
Key indicator digital questionnaires collect data from project participants and partner organisations. The collected data is automatically aggregated, processed, and becomes available online for further analysis through customised dashboards and tables visualising main key indicators metrics. Project partners, HEKS/EPER country offices, and headquarters have direct access to the data in real time. The findings and learning obtained through the system contribute to the monitoring and evaluation process, efficient steering and decision-making. Implementing a digital system improves data quality, facilitates progress measurement, increases visibility, transparency and reduces analysis costs. To ensure that the new global HIP strategy 21-24 with its adapted results framework can be monitored against, HEKS/EPER revised in 2020-2021 the key indicators and adapted the digital system, considering the feedback and needs of the implementing units and partners. HKIs shall enable permanent monitoring of projects and programmes to foster adaptations of intervention during the year and also in the frame of the annual reporting when HKI analysis are a base for steering decisions to increase relevance and effectiveness. In 2019, the HKI digital system was distinguished by the Swiss Digital Economic Award as a finalist in the 'Digital Transformation Award – Government and NGO sector'.

How HEKS/EPER uses its digital key indicators system – illustrated through the HEKS/EPER key indicator 'self-perceived income'

Interviews with project participants in the countries show (Graph A) that **58%** (2021: 56%) of the people achieved either a medium or massive increase in their income. Of the persons reporting a positive change in their income, **33% explain this increase by increased outputs** and **30% by increased market prices**, both remarkably facing numerous global and regional crises and conflicts. **87% of respondents** stating income increase are involved in **farming/ agriculture activities**, **16% provide market services** (trade, transportation, accommodation, business services) and **10% process agricultural products**.

25.9% (2021: 27.4%) **stated a decrease in their incomes**, mainly due to **decreased production** caused by unfavourable climate conditions or lack of ability to invest in production due to higher production costs.

Income was used by 45% of the respondents for daily consumption purposes, 28% for education, 24% reinvested in their businesses or farms, and 22% saved money. Amongst those 20% stating they used income for 'other' purposes, most spent it for medical care, health insurance, house renovation and bank loan repayments.



In-depth interviews with 5000 project participants in 13 countries revealed for 2022 many qualitative and quantitative information. 58% indicated increased income.

High standards for evaluations & impact assessments

Evaluations

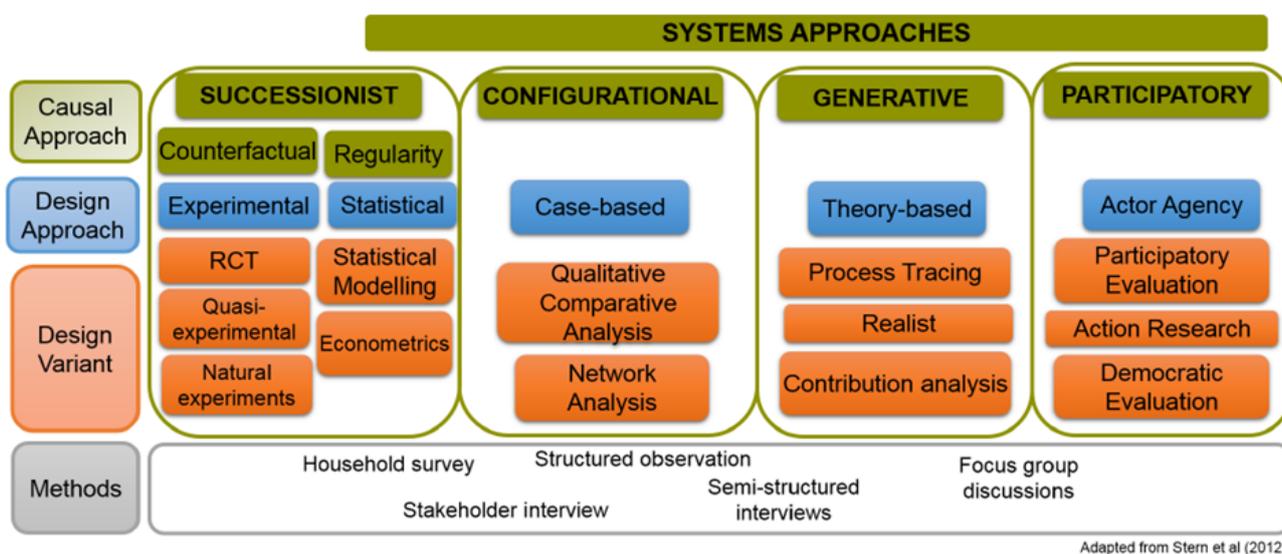
An evaluation aims to provide a credible analysis of an intervention's results and/or processes, focusing on one or several of the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria *relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact*. Evaluations enable us to learn what works and what does not. They are an important source of information for decision-making and steering processes and provide the information required for accountability towards relevant stakeholders. Evaluations complement continuous monitoring activities and contribute to HEKS/EPER's institutional learning. At HEKS/EPER, the evaluation policy determines specific criteria for which interventions need to be evaluated, when and whether the evaluation needs to be conducted by an external evaluator or if an internal evaluation is possible. HEKS/EPER introduces 2023 a quality assurance checklist to improve the quality of evaluations, which is used to assess the Terms of Reference, Inception Reports, and final Evaluation Reports against extensive quality criteria. These quality criteria include the suitability of the evaluation approach/design to answer the given evaluation questions or whether two or more complementary and distinct data collection methods and data types have been used for answering the same evaluation question (i.e. triangulation).

The steps of an evaluation are ...

- 1) Evaluability Check (Goal, scope and added value of evaluation (EA doc))
- 2) Plan & budget (Terms of Reference)
- 3) Advertise & commission (JD, Add, Hiring)
- 4) Manage design & methodology (Inception report & final budget)
- 5) Manage implementation (inform stakeholders – data collection)
- 6) Manage reporting (Draft & final report)
- 7) Learning4Steering (Management Response, PPT, Video, Brochure, Policy Brief, etc.)
- 8) Wrap up (store and analyse all evaluations to learn as an organisation & to improve the process)

Impact assessments

According to HEKS/EPER's impact assessment policies, the impact is understood as the changes *produced by* an intervention. Consequently, any assessment of impact should not only describe or measure the changes that have been observed but should also identify the role of the project or programme in *producing* these changes. This is often referred to as causal attribution, **causal contribution**, or causal inference. HEKS/EPER launches about 1 impact assessment per year with a time frame of 3-4 years of accompanying the project or programme of interest.



Causal Approaches and Impact Evaluation Designs. According to Eager, R.A. & Barnett, C. Designing Effective Ways to Evaluate Impact, 2017.

Example of the Open Forum Programme Impact Assessment in Israel / Palestine

Introduction: The Open Forum (OF) programme is a network and exchange platform for organisations working in conflict transformation. Open Forum partners are developing joint strategies and projects around access to land, housing, and public space. It serves as an open space for partner organisations to share experiences, develop synergies, and engage in co-operations.

The three expected outcomes of the Open Forum are:

- **Outcome 1:** The intervention has created an infrastructure (physical or virtual) that the target community can further utilise.
- **Outcome 2:** An action taken by an entity within this community or the whole community has been independently acknowledged in public discourse.
- **Outcome 3:** Local or national duty bearers take concrete action supporting the right-to-land issues concerning the case.

The Open Forum Impact Assessment in a Nutshell

- **Goal:** To explore what factors influenced which outcomes and what was the influence of external factors.
- **Objectives:** Summative (accountability) and formative (Learning for Steering).
- **OECD-DAC criteria:** effectiveness and impact.
- **Data collection:** Baseline (2017) & Endline (2020) in 152 locations with 148 target communities + 4 additional ones.
- **Evaluation team:** 3 local consultants.
- **Methods:** Mix of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis tools: Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) and Participatory Assessment of Development (PADev).

Methodology: This impact assessment pursued both *summative* and *formative* objectives and focused on two of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) criteria: *effectiveness* and *impact*. For HEKS/EPER, the *impact* is regarded 'as the positive and negative changes the intervention produces, which can be directly or indirectly, intended or unintended'.

The evaluation team collected the data for the two methods, *Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA)* and *Participatory Assessment of Development (PADev)*, through existing literature, self-reported data, and individual and group interviews in analysed it in a seven-step process:

- Definition of 6 context indicators and 10 intervention indicators.
- Creation of a database with all indicators populated by all 148 locations.
- QCA was performed to assess which factors led to the greatest possibility of success or influenced success.
- Selection of the four most successful case studies (highest number of outcomes achieved with the lowest number of intervention indicators).
- Data collection from selected case-study communities and partners through individual and group interviews following a *PADev approach* to isolate some attribution measures. Special attention was given to reducing potential bias, starting with the questions about the OF intervention. PADev helped explain how the OF intervention fit into the broader context/community experience.
- Triangulation of data from the baseline, the outcome mapping indicators from project proposals and previous evaluations.
- Interviews with partner organisations and local and HQ HEKS/EPER representatives.

Main results: Overall, the IA found that the theory of change (TOC) is idealistic and very ambitious. However, at least one outcome was achieved in 123 of the 148 target communities (83%). The overall insights from the context and intervention indicators are that individual indicators' relatively high failure rate should be understood as existing in a context where a wide range of factors can influence outcomes and that multiple activities from the OF and other actors are central to ensure success.

The **four case studies** showed that the **degree of urgency** related to displacement and the **perception of potential resolution** influences community engagement which (together with opportunities of the target communities) is crucial for the success of the OF. Therefore, the mains factors that influence – or at least contribute to positive outcomes are the **urgency** of the threat being mitigated through the activity, the **type of activity**, the degree to which the activity is considered **relevant**, and the **credibility of and trust** in the individuals and implementing partner organisations. The OF interventions were consistently ranked among the top two interventions conducted in the location, and there is a strong indication that the activities were relevant and effective.

1. Effectiveness: To what extent were the objectives of the OF achieved?

83% of locations achieved at least one of the three outcomes, while 17% did not. While this may appear stark, it is important to underscore that the context is complex and volatile and that all case study communities experienced considerable changes and additional stresses. In addition, HEKS/EPER funding decreased in 2017 and 2018. However, OF brought together partners of different backgrounds, histories, and approaches.

2. Effectiveness: What were the major factors influencing the (non-)achievement of objectives?

Two major success factors are **collaboration** and **individual employees**. In the OF context, collaborative work does not need to be common activities or in the pursuit of joint objectives. Rather, the evaluation found that there is already value in working together

in far looser ways, such as facilitating access to information and introducing key individuals and entities at the community level. Moreover, the role, relationship and trust of individual employees working with the communities are paramount, as the space is so fragile and, thus, trust and access to communities play a crucial role in success.

3. Impact: What real impact have the OF projects made for the target groups?

This question is very difficult to answer. Success may not directly improve living conditions and reduce conflict, but it may mean simply maintaining the status quo. On the community level, all three outcomes were partially achieved. On the overarching level, it is yet early to determine success. Still, several interviewed individuals stated that to be willing to continue the activities once funding from HEKS/EPER is over.

Overall, it can be said that there were concrete achievements regarding the three outcomes and that there is a consensus amongst respondents that an entity such as OF is highly valuable within the Palestinian-Israeli context. However, the achievement of all outcomes in all locations needs to be fully clear (case-by-case discussion needed). Because the level of urgency and threat determines community engagement, there is a risk that achievements are only temporary. Personal relationships are crucial, so disengaging with communities could harm long-term sustainability.

Conclusion: The impact assessment concludes that rather than searching for a fool-proof model, organisations can explore the necessary conditions, but insufficient on their own, to achieve a positive outcome and explore which factors may complement these conditions and that OF as a dialogue-platform fulfils a clear and important role within the Israeli-Palestinian context and can be utilised not only to further broad peace support efforts but also as a platform to foster loose collaborations that can, in turn, strengthen the activities conducted in communities.

Learning: HEKS/EPER continues to utilise the Open Forum Impact Assessment results for internal and external learning. The team of the Israel / Palestine country programme has assessed the results of the impact assessments in various workshops to adapt the focus of the country programme. An Israel/Palestine team staff member presented the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) methodology to the SEVAL community to Swiss INGOs in March 2023.

Example of an internal evaluation – the Cambodia Programme (2018-2022)

Instead of commissioning an external evaluation, Cambodia's HEKS/EPER country office staff held an internal evaluation workshop to review their country programme 2018-2022. First, Terms of Reference (ToR) were developed, defining the workshop's objectives, questions, methodology & process, itinerary and roles & responsibilities. The objectives were to:

- assess the overall implementation of the country programme and capitalise on the key learnings.
- Discuss and reflect on the evaluation and lessons learned from the different projects.
- Integrate learning and insights from HEKS Myanmar.
- Develop a joint vision for the new regional Mekong programme.
- Provide direction for the strategic decision for the new regional Mekong programme development (2023-2026 and adaptation to the new HIP).
- Identify opportunities, changes in context, risk factors and potential workstreams to be integrated into the new regional Mekong strategy.
- Update and revise the Theory of Change based on the main insights and recommendations.

From September 28 to 30, 2022, sixteen people from the country office Cambodia attended the workshop. During the first day, entitled 'From Analysis to Vision', the achievements of the country programme indicators and the projects' achievements & lessons learnt were discussed, and implications/steering decisions for the upcoming Cambodia country and regional Mekong strategy 2023-2027, including the geographical coverage were defined. During the second day, entitled 'From Vision to Implementation', it was discussed how to integrate the thematic areas (such as resilient climate agriculture, influencing market systems, off-farm livelihood, tenure security, land conflict etc.), agriculture & land governance policy, structures of cooperation exchange) and working approaches (such as HRBA, systemic approach, conflict sensitivity, gender, strengthening civil society, MSD, inclusive businesses approach, territorial approach, Human Centred Design, and Conflict Transformation). In addition, a stakeholder and conflict sensitivity analysis was conducted, the former country programme's Monitoring and

Evaluation system was reviewed, and lessons learnt were defined. On the third day, possible adaptations to the draft Theory of Change (ToC) were discussed in three groups, and the next steps in the strategy preparation were defined. After the workshop, a comprehensive Programme Review Workshop Report was compiled, summarising all achievements, learnings and next steps.

This programme review workshop is an excellent example of how an effective internal evaluation can produce valuable insights and concrete next steps for the next programme phase within a short period and a relatively small budget.

Achievements & Perspectives

Achievements over the past years

From M&E to MEAL: The original M&E strategy 2014-2016 was designed to renew the PCM system, including necessary guidelines, policies, templates and tools, and a key indicator system with a simple digital data tool. In the 2017-2019 MEL strategy, 'Knowledge Sharing' was incorporated into the MEAL unit. The HEKS/EPER MEL unit positioned itself as one of the leading agencies in Switzerland, including proficient Impact Assessments, the implementation of sound evaluations including management responses to foster evidence-based programming, and the building of an advanced digital HEKS/EPER Key Indicator (HKI) system and performance assessment and quality assurance system.

In 2020, the MEL team incorporated the 'A' for accountability, being responsible for enhancing mutual accountability according to CHS standards and supporting compliance with Governance and Safeguarding standards of Global Cooperation. MEAL facilitates joint with the respective thematic focal point (Gender, PSEAH, Controlling, etc.) staff training or designs e-courses and train-the-trainer sessions in the countries. Also, monitoring breaches of the Code of Conduct, SEAH or anti-corruption standards was built – with a process started in 2022 to establish a professional FCRM, globally digitalised and harmonised.

Achievements 2022

- 25 project/programme evaluations completed in 13 countries.
- 2 completed impact assessments: Bangladesh & Palestine/Israel.
- 89% of projects use key indicators digital system.
- 13'300 interviews conducted by our partners.
- 30 MEL training webinars with an accumulated total of 250 participants.
- 20 digital training sessions on various GC topics such as PSEAH, Climate Justice, Agroecology, Controlling ...

HKI digital system for monitoring, performance assessment and analysis

89% of projects use the digital HKI system, which is a great result, given that new partners joined HEKS/EPER, and it takes some time to introduce those. The partners conducted **13'300 interviews** with project participants, which is 2600 interviews more compared to the previous year. This can be explained by releasing COVID limitations to reach the respondents and enrolment of new projects to the HKI system.

Since the introduction of the digital monitoring system in 2017, significant efforts have been put into capacity building, professionalising implementation, and promoting the ownership and learning culture at all levels: project, country, globally and also within thematic priorities. The regularly processed feedback from system users and required adaptations for the new global HIP 21-24 strategy boost the improvements of the digital system. As a result, the HKI digital system was updated technically and contextually to flexibly facilitate various data collection, monitoring and analysis needs of all stakeholders.

At the same time, the MEAL unit continues to revise the PCM templates and guidelines, constantly adapting them to new realities of contexts and needs of implementing units and partners to have simpler documents ensuring homogenous planning and reporting yet giving the necessary flexibility respecting the skills, needs and context of the staff.



Haiti: Collecting info directly from project participants with the **HEKS/EPER digital data collection and analysis tool**.

In the MEAL webinar series, the unit conducted 6 webinars in 3 languages each on PCM planning, monitoring and analysis tools, with more than 100 participants from Headquarters, Country offices and partner organisations. At the same time, staff rotations and the introduction of new features required additional training efforts. Data quality and reliability remain a challenge. Auxiliary tools, such as checklists, focal points assignments, etc., must be developed, tested and implemented in the coming years.

HEKS/EPER was acknowledged by SDC, donors and other Swiss iNGOs as an organisation that has made particular progress in digital maturity, striving for effective results-based programming.

Impact Assessments

- **Open Forum Programme Impact Assessment** in Israel / Palestine: see the promising example above.
- External **impact assessment of the Bangladesh country programme** 2017-2021 focusing on Social Inclusion of Dalit and Adibashi in Northwest Bangladesh (HIP Outcomes 2, 3, 4). The IA was **designed** to take an overall theory-based approach, specifically applying contribution analysis to weave together several sources of evidence to understand what changes have occurred and how. Nested within the design were a quasi-experiment, which took a counterfactual approach to causal inference, as well as the analysis of qualitative data and a document review of existing monitoring data and programme reports. The **IA was completed in 2022**. It focused on the OECD-DAC criteria effectiveness and impact. The programme and its evaluation were implemented against the backdrop of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The implementation of programme activities was significantly affected by several full and partial lockdowns, some activities were refocused to address the pandemic, and partners were involved in additional pandemic-related programming. Therefore, the qualitative data collection was initially completed in March 2021. At the time, the collection of quantitative data had to be put on hold. Since the qualitative and quantitative endline data should have been collected simultaneously, both data collections were repeated from April – June 2022, the data was analysed, and the final report was completed in December 2022.

Evaluations

In 2022, 25 project/programme evaluations (6 internal, 19 external) were completed in 13 countries. Two were mid-term evaluations, while 23 were end-of-phase evaluations to inform the next project/programme phase. For 18 out of 19 external evaluations (95%), an explicit management response (MR) was written to document the level of acceptance ('accept' / 'partially accept' / 'reject') for every recommendation, the rationale for it and steering decisions. Best efforts are being made that the reflections in the management response flow in the new project/programme proposals.

In many contexts, finding knowledgeable and available evaluators is a significant challenge. In some cases, the evaluation conclusions and recommendations were not satisfactory. To make the best use of time and financial resources, in 2022, more internal evaluations were conducted. See 'Example of an internal evaluation of the Cambodia Programme 2018-2022' above. And, the MEAL unit at HQ is considering confirming this practice as a good practice, see 'Perspectives' below.

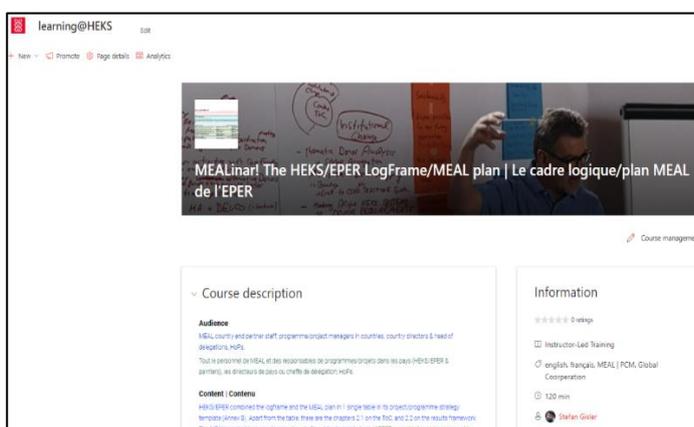
Country	Project number, name, and duration	HIP OC	Who	Timing	Report	MR
Cambodia	652.019 Country Programme (2018-2022) Improved sustainable livelihood and equal rights for rural communities in Cambodia: Review Workshop	2, 3, 4	Int.	End-of-phase	Dec 2022	NA
Cambodia	652.323 Cambodia Pepper Sector Enhancement (2019-2022)	2, 3	Int.	End-of-phase	Sep 2022	NA
Cambodia	652.325 Community Empowerment and Peacebuilding (2019-2022) 652.326 Community Empowerment for Conflict Transformation on Land and Natural Resource Governance (2019-2022)	2, 3, 4	Ext.	End-of-phase	Oct 2022	Dec 2022
Colombia	842.395 Peace, human rights, sustainable development, defence of territory and the environment in the Valle del Río Cimitarra Peasant Reserve Zone" (2020-2022)	2, 3	Ext.	End-of-phase	Oct 2022	Nov 2022
Congo DR	788.352 Country Programme (2020-2022)	2, 3, 4	Ext.	End-of-phase	Nov 2022	Feb 2023
Congo DR	788.359 Market access for small-scale maize and cassava producers (May 2020 – Apr 2023)	2, 3	Ext.	End-of-phase	May 2023	May 2023
Ethiopia	706.384 Apiculture Management & Market Access through Lead Beekeepers in Horro Guduru Wollega Zone of Oromia Region (Aug 2019 - Dec 2022)	2, 3	Ext.	End-of-phase	Apr 2022	Apr 2022
Ethiopia	706.402 Viable Innovations for Resilience and Livelihood in Moyale and Miyo District of Borena Zone (Nov 2020 - Oct 2022)	2	Ext.	Mid-term	Mar 2022	Jun 2022
Ethiopia	706.406 Innovation for resilience project in Dassenech, South Ormo (Nov 2020 – Oct 2022)	2	Ext.	End-of-phase	Mar 2023	May 2022
Ethiopia	706.408 Enhancing Food Security through Agro-Ecology in 4 rural kebeles of Hulet Eju Enesie woredas, East Gojjam zone of Amhara Region (Oct 2020 - Oct 2022)	2, 3	Ext.	End-of-phase	Aug 2022	May 2023
Ethiopia	706.409 Desert Locust Response and Resilience Building (May 2021 – Oct 2023)	1	Ext.	Mid-term	May 2023	May 2023
Ethiopia	706.413 Drought Focus Response in Borana Zone (Mar - Aug 2022)	1	Ext.	End-of-phase	Feb 2023	Mar 2023
Honduras	835.361 Strengthening Agroecological Production, Biodiversity, Income Generation and Territorial Defence in Southern Honduras (Feb 2020 – Dec 2022)	1, 2, 3	Ext.	Mid-term	Jan 2023	Jan 2023
Niger	Country Programme (Jan 2018 - Jun 2023)	1, 2, 3, 4	Ext.	End-of-phase	Feb 2023	Mar 2023
Niger	756.343 Support for the monitoring of Doum and the strengthening of its industries (Aug 2019 - Jul 2022)	1, 3, 4	Ext.	End-of-phase	Jul 2022	No
Senegal	764.336 Development of a participatory guarantee system (2020-2022)	2, 3, 4	Int.	End-of-phase	Mar 2022	Jun 2022
Senegal	764.342 Programme to support the strengthening of community resilience in the Ferlo (2019-2022)	2, 3, 4	Ext.	End-of-phase	May 2022	May 2022
Senegal	764.337 Securing the land of the populations of the communes of Keur Moussa, Diender, Cayar, Diass, Yenne, Sindia, Popenguine-Ndayane (Jun 2020 - May 2023)	3	Ext.	End-of-phase	Mar 2023	Mar 2023
Serbia	927.385 Social Inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups in Serbia (2019-2022)	2	Ext.	End-of-phase	Dec 2022	No
South Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia)	904.351 Horticulture Market Development Project (HMDP) in Vayots Dzor and Gegharkunik Marzes of Armenia (2018-2022)	1, 2, 3	Ext.	End-of-phase	May 2023	May 2023
South Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia)	904.358 Strengthening Journalists' Knowledge and Skills in conflict reporting in Armenia (2020-2022)	1, 2	Ext.	End-of-phase	Sep 2022	Sep 2022
South Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia)	918.050 Social Innovation Platform Georgia (Apr 2020 – Dec 2022)	1, 2	Ext.	End-of-phase	Aug 2022	Sep 2022
Uganda / South Sudan	786.015 COVID-19 Response Project in Bidibidi Refugee Settlement and Host Communities, Uganda (Oct-Dec 2021)	1	Int.	End-of-phase	May 2022	NA
Uganda / South Sudan	774.378 Community Rehabilitation and Stabilization through Livelihoods and Peaceful co-existence for conflict-affected communities in Yei and Morobo Counties, South Sudan (2021-2022)	1, 2	Int.	End-of-phase	Nov 2022	NA
Ukraine	951.329 Provision of targeted emergency food assistance to conflict-affected populations in Ukraine (Feb – Aug 2022)	1	Int.	End-of-phase	Nov 2022	NA

Legend: HIP OC = HEKS/EPER International Programme 2021-24 Outcome // MR = Management Response.

Learning 4 steering – adaptive management – PCM/MEAL training

PCM and other MEAL tools were slightly updated to match the needs of decentralisation implemented in 2022 – a webinar series during 2021 and 2022 on PCM/MEAL issues led to more knowledge and ownership amongst country-based staff working in the field of MEAL. To increase relevance and effectiveness in meeting the needs of people and communities, it remains key to be flexible and permanently adapt strategy, programme and activities to the changing and fragile context – the now 10-year-old HIP principle Learning4Steering is paramount for adaptive management. HEKS/EPER made steps towards more evidence-based programming while planning and during implementation.

Digitalisation and ICT were identified as key opportunities during HIP 21-24 context analysis. In 2022, they proved to be effective tools in managing programmes, not only bridging the remaining COVID-19 mobility restrictions but also reaching out to staff globally and interlinking them, fostering mutual exchange. Since 2019, MEAL has maintained a regularly updated and often visited intranet website on Sharepoint promoting internal and external online courses, learning events, and webinars, including a wide range of links to platforms for knowledge sharing and capacity building relevant to HEKS/EPER's work. About 40 different modules are offered to staff to learn about PCM and MEAL – from sessions on project identification, context and stakeholder analysis to sessions on how to elaborate Theories of change, logframes, MEAL plans – how they decide on indicators, how to write an evidence-based Proposal Document or an annual report, and very specific topics on sampling, applying the HEKS/EPER digital key indicator system; or how to plan and execute evaluations.



In 2022, many new features were added, including **the Microsoft LMS 365 system** (see picture left) to offer staff of country offices but also staff of external country offices e-courses and online webinars about PCM and MEAL processes and tools, but also learning sessions about other GC relevant topics such as agroecology, climate justice, land governance, water, social inclusion, etc.

Since 2019, MEAL has hosted a **public website** (https://en.heks.ch/Institutional_Governance) on HEKS/EPER's institutional governance. Publishing almost all HEKS/EPER reports,

factsheets and evaluations, strategies, programmatic, administrative, managerial and thematic policies and guidelines was well received by donors, partner organisations, media, public, and HEKS/EPER own staff as a pioneer practice demonstrating transparency and enabling learning. The investments in a cloud server system (operative since 2017 and accessible for all HEKS/EPER staff at HQ and in countries), in an intranet and in a webinar series on various programmatic and managerial topics during the last three years paid off in 2022. HEKS/EPER aims to facilitate efficient, effective, CO₂-friendly, remote management of offices, partners, programmes, and projects.

Accountability

In 2021, 10 projects in 4 countries (DRC, Niger, South Caucasus, Bangladesh) and 1 HA delegation (DRC) underwent the CHS alliance verification process providing feedback on the practical implementation of the nine commitments of the core humanitarian standards. With 50 staff interviews at HQ and country office level, 20 mgmt staff interviews, 40 partner staff interviews, and 140 project participant interviews in the communities' partners or HEKS/EPER are active.² The analysis demonstrated that the overall rating on a scale from 1 to 4 is good (average higher than 3), particularly good considering tools, guidelines, and policies with a rating of 3.3, quite good in implementation of the 9 standards expect lack in applying the feedback and complaint mechanisms

² HEKS/EPER is a member of the **CHS Alliance**, **ACT Alliance** and **Transparency International** and acts according to the Code of Conduct for Contractual Partners of the **FDFA** and also according to [ACT code of conduct](#). HEKS/EPER is part of the Community of Cooperation (**KoGe**) working group on Good Governance and exchanges with Bread for All and other ACT iNGOs on PSEAH, misuse of power, corruption etc. The HRBA and the Core Humanitarian Standards are an even more substantial part of programming in the countries according to the HIP 21-24, embracing mutual accountability, participation and easily accessible feedback and complaint mechanisms. The **FFAG** policy details regulations, standards and agreement templates to which contracted staff, implementing partners, consultants and suppliers must comply. All relevant documents on HEKS/EPER's strategies, policies, guidelines and tools to manage its international programme are published online: [ID institutional governance website](#). Specific Gender or PSEAH documents are ...

(rating below 2 points) in the way project participants, yet also partner staff can report back. This matches the observations of the controlling and ME(A)L units of HEKS/EPER.

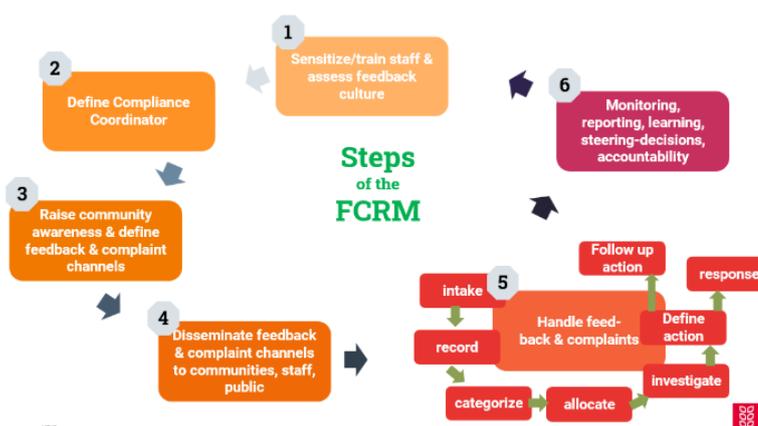
Therefore, as a first step, in 2022, the existing whistleblowing and complaint channel, <https://heks.integrityline> – managed by an external service provider and integrated into HEKS/EPER’s overall good governance concept – has been promoted more intense through country offices and humanitarian delegations.

MEAL accompanied the revision and roll-out of **new safeguarding policies** (PSEAH, child safeguarding, gender and diversity). The elaboration of the PSEAH policy was embedded in a comprehensive learning process within the whole organisation and the global cooperation division. The **Code of Conduct** was adapted in 2022 to align with all safeguarding and equality policies and approved by the Board of Trustees in June 2022. All staff, based in Switzerland and in the countries completed the **PSEAH online training** in 2022. MEAL facilitated jointly with the respective thematic focal point (Gender, PSEAH, Controlling, etc.) the staff training and designed with the Microsoft LMS365 system e-courses and train-the-trainer sessions in the countries.

And in-depth **face-to-face workshops** in the countries to increase awareness and skills considering PSEAH, in a combined **gender and PSEAH training**, were carried out in Ethiopia, Kosovo, Myanmar, Georgia and Cambodia. The training on HEKS/EPER being a PSEAH-sensitive, inclusive and diverse organisation will be held for all HEKS/EPER staff in 2023. It is also an aim to train the country staff as trainers to sensitise the partner organisations and to disseminate the core message of a zero-tolerance approach and mechanisms of feedback and complaint to the project participants

Feedback & Complaint Response Mechanism

In response to the low CHS rating of the project participants considering the feedback & complaint response mechanism and to enable a global monitoring of breaches of the Code of Conduct, Safeguarding or Governance standards, HEKS/EPER started in 2022 a process to develop an **FCRM template and guideline** compulsory to for all country offices. For this, the MEAL unit of Global Cooperation interacts with CHS and other INGOs, such as Christian Aid and with the Humanitarian Regional Office Ukraine in Bucharest as front-runner and pilot. It shall ensure project participants, partners, and staff jointly establish trusted and effective feedback channels and ways to disseminate them, allowing everyone to speak up, deposit feedback and complaints, and receive a timely and adequate response.



The **six steps of HEKS/EPER's Feedback & Complaint Response Mechanism** from sensitizing staff to handling cases, and reporting and

The FCRM is a systematic accountability and early warning system for structural problems. It is a chance to improve HEKS/EPER's governance and project management, and it helps to create trust and enhances mutual accountability.

Perspectives

With its MEAL strategy 2020-22, HEKS/EPER builds on the context evolution and its long-standing experiences to make MEAL an inherent part of each project/programme, thanks to ongoing training and joint global reflections. Main adaptations and continuations will be ...

- In 2023/24, the MEAL unit claims more responsibilities to ensure **compliance with safeguarding and good governance policies**, fostering mutual accountability on programmatic, management and governance levels. Enhancing cooperation with management, controlling unit, project/programme staff of HEKS/EPER and partners as well with external experts and allies effective Good Governance and PSEAH/Safeguarding training and monitoring. The MEAL team will be the CHS focal point for enhancing CHS verification and coordinating efforts towards a sound, professional, well-accepted Feedback & Complaint Response Mechanism.

- Emphasis on supporting staff and partners during the **planning phase** focusing on a sound theory of change, Logframe, and MEAL plan to increase the project's or programme's quality and relevance. Results-oriented programming will also enable proper monitoring against the initial outcomes/outputs and targets as a basis for analysis and evidence-based steering decisions – no plan, no progress to assess.
- HEKS/EPER has successfully and professionally conducted **Impact Assessments (IA)** in various countries over the past year, proving competent in doing so and enabling country and partner staff to learn and improve. Yet, IAs are costly, time- and resource intense, and to derive global learnings is limited. Therefore, MEAL assesses re-allocating these resources favouring MEAL basics and proper evaluations to cope with challenges and needs of implementing staff, also addressing the needs of humanitarian units and the requirements of donors on hands-on monitoring data and reports.
- The **evaluation documents** (guidelines & templates) will be revised in 2023 to simplify the evaluation process and achieve more tangible recommendations. MEAL unit at HQ will assess the criteria for which projects/programmes must be evaluated, considering relevance, financial volume, etc. And it considers confirming the shift from external to more internal evaluations as good practice, reducing the necessary human and financial resources while maintaining high quality.
- Continue with **modular, flexible training on PCM tools and ME(A)L topics** for HEKS/EPER staff and contracted partner organisations. They shall be capacitated to identify, plan, implement, monitor, evaluate and learn effectively and in good quality. PCM focus 2022 is on identification, planning, and reporting, including the ability to learn and adaptive management (well-informed steering decisions incorporating HKI data).
- HEKS/EPER shall remain a leading actor in the Swiss MEAL community. Enhancing the exchange and cooperation of Global Cooperation with research and other IC actors and supporting acquisition endeavours is a clear mandate of the MEAL unit to improve our knowledge, skills and public acknowledgement.
- Further disseminate how to use the **digital indicator system** for analysis and evidence-based steering decisions. Evaluate how additional digital monitoring tools, such as open-source Kobo used by partners and HEKS/EPER units independently, SDC's digital 'Results Data Management' compulsory for SDC mandates, or other digital solutions promoted by different donors enrich or affect the data collection and analysis.
- Support Global Cooperation endeavours to intensify a **joint institutional learning culture, including countries and HQ embracing new IC tools, digitalisation** with its opportunities of remote management and knowledge sharing, and promoting the organisational **decentralisation** of skills, resources, competencies, decision-making power enabling **locally-led solutions** owned by CSOs and civil society in the countries.
- **MEAL support and collaboration worldwide:** The MEAL unit at HQ fosters mutual exchange amongst HEKS/EPER MEAL staff in the countries through the MEAL community of practices (MEAL CoP), aiming at increasing quality and common understanding. Since its launch in the autumn of 2022, it has gained momentum, and the MEAL staff exchanged on topics such as Annual Reporting, HKI data collection & analysis, collaboration with partner organisations, KoboToolbox and PowerBI. In addition, the MEAL unit at HQ is actively consulting country offices in hiring and training professional MEAL staff worldwide.

Other HEKS/EPER publications related to 'MEAL.'

- HEKS/EPER (2020). Impact Assessment Policy Brief – Access to Land Senegal, Zurich, May 2020.
- HEKS/EPER (2019). Impact Assessment Policy & Guideline, Zurich, June 2019.
- HEKS/EPER (2019). Meta-Analysis of HEKS/EPER Evaluations. Zurich, November 2019.
- HEKS/EPER (2018). Evaluation Policy. Zurich, April 2018.
- HEKS/EPER (2018). Capex on impact assessments conducted 2015-2018, Zurich, October 2018.
- HEKS/EPER (2017). Global Monitoring System Policy. Zürich, May 2017.
- HEKS/EPER (2015). Meta-Analysis of HEKS/EPER evaluations, Zurich, February 2015.
- HEKS/EPER (2015). HEKS/EPER Programme and Project Cycle Management. Zürich, 2015; revised in 2016 and 2017.

This is HEKS/EPER



HEKS/EPER is the aid organisation of the Swiss protestant churches. It operates towards a more equitable and peaceful world (and Switzerland) with resilient communities, focusing on four topics: **Climate Justice, Inclusion, Right to Land & Food, and Refuge & Migration.**

In 2022, HEKS/EPER supported more than 60 projects in Switzerland, the inclusion of 98'000 people. With 232 projects in 30 countries, 2.5 million people directly in economic, social or humanitarian need. The operating income of the whole organisation has risen to 114 M CHF and expenditure to 108.13 M CHF – of which 54.54 M CHF were net costs spent for the international programme.

In the Global Cooperation division, HEKS/EPER ameliorated with 17.8 M CHF (net costs) spent on 96 **development projects** for the life of 946'267 people focusing on access to land and resources, securing basic services, fostering sustainable production and inclusive market systems. It also promoted the social inclusion of marginalised, inclusive governance structures and conflict transformation. 23.4 M benefitted indirectly – e.g., through successful advocacy for new rights or policies (e.g., right to land, water, education, health, market access).

HEKS/EPER's **humanitarian aid** spent more than 29 M CHF (net costs) in 72 projects in 18 countries, directly reaching 1.522 M people affected by conflicts and disasters; another 2.4 M were indirectly reached with health prevention campaigns or rebuilt public sanitation, road or health infrastructures.

In the frame of **Church Cooperation**, HEKS/EPER enabled with 2.26 M CHF social work of Reformed Churches in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, reaching out to almost 35'000 people through 29 projects; another 30'500 were reached indirectly.

To **sensitise in Switzerland** the public, media, politics and other stakeholders about the needs and rights of people and communities worldwide, addressing causes of global inequality, and to advocate towards a transition to a more equitable, peaceful world, preserving the limited natural resources, HEKS/EPER spent 4.5 M CHF on policy work.

HEKS/EPER Global Cooperation strives towards systemic change with its human rights-based approach, promoting ownership, innovation, and the nexus between humanitarian aid and development activities. Together with competent partners and well-interconnected alliances, HEKS/EPER fosters constant dialogue between civil society, the private sector, and Government actors enabling people and communities to advocate for their needs and rights. The international divisions' conflict- and gender-sensitive programming is risk-informed and evidence-based. A proficient institutional governance framework allows effectiveness and transparency.

In Switzerland, HEKS/EPER supported with 34.2 M CHF net costs of more than 60 projects in 15 cantons disadvantaged people in becoming socially and economically integrated by promoting equal opportunity and assisting jobless people, refugees, and other individuals by providing day structures, legal advice, vocational training, language courses, dialogue platforms, etc.

The nine core values of HEKS/EPER: Justice / Self-Determination / Participation / Respect / Solidarity / Support without Borders / Close to People / Effectiveness, / Accountability.

Strategies, policies, guidelines, and reports published on ID's Governance Website: https://en.heks.ch/Institutional_Governance

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