

HEKS/EPER Thematic Factsheet 2024 & Report 2023



Humanitarian Aid

HEKS/EPER Global Cooperation's challenges, strategy, promising practices, achievements and perspectives on humanitarian aid covering the basic needs of people and communities.

Why and How HEKS/EPER Provides Humanitarian Aid

Global Challenges – Context

The world is in a grave state of humanitarian crisis. In February 2024, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that 302.2 million people worldwide will need humanitarian assistance in 2024.¹ This represents a decrease from the 347.7 mio estimated for the previous year, but an increase of 388% compared to the number of people in need in 2015 (77.9 million).

During the last decade, the main drivers behind this trend were conflicts and displacement that often led to protracted crises keeping people from covering their basic needs and positively transforming their societies. Some examples include Syria, with a record 16.7 million people in need of humanitarian aid by March 2024² out of which 7.2 million are IDPs.³ along with more than 8 million Syrian refugees worldwide; the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), with conflicts in the region of the Great Lakes, South Sudan, where 6.1 million people have been displaced internally, and almost 1 million to neighbouring countries⁴; and the massive displacement of Rohingya from Myanmar, mainly to Bangladesh⁵. After more than two years of war, UNHCR reported almost 6.5 million refugees from Ukraine out of which nearly 6 million were recorded across Europe by April 2024. By the end of 2023, IOM estimated 3.7 million IDPs in Ukraine⁶. UNHCR's latest Global Trends report reports 108.4 million people worldwide who were forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing public order out of which 35.3 million refugees fled across international borders.⁷



The effects of climate change reduce access of people – e.g., in Senegal (picture) – to natural resources such as soil, water or wood. Agricultural production and food security are hampered.

In many cases, their displacement is linked to a conflict, but an increasing number of people are forced to leave their homes due to disasters caused by natural hazards and the effects of climate change. According to the World Bank, climate change could force 216 million people to migrate to their countries by 2050.

The impacts of climate change are already killing people and devastating lives and livelihoods every year, and they will get worse without immediate, determined action. The frequency and intensity of climatological disasters are increasing (35% since the 1990s), with more category 4 and 5 storms, more heatwaves breaking temperature

records, and more heavy rains, among many other extremes. Loss of natural resources, food insecurity, direct and indirect health impacts, and displacement are rising. In the past ten years, 83% of all disasters triggered by natural hazards were caused by extreme weather and climate-related events, killing more than 400'000 people since 2010. Acute food insecurity is a reality for 258 million people in 58 countries.

The Global Humanitarian Overview 2024 names economic dynamics as the third main driver of global humanitarian needs. As they overlap with conflict, climate disasters, infectious disease outbreaks, and others, economic factors can be a primary driver or strong contributor to rising needs.

¹ Source: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2024-february-update-snapshot-29-february-2024>

² Source: <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/syria/>

³ Source: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/syr>. By April 2024, UNHCR counted more than 5 million registered Syrian refugees in the MENA region, including 3.8 million hosted in Türkiye (source: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/>)

⁴ Source: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/democratic-republic-congo-situation>

⁵ UNHCR reported 965'000 Rohingya in Bangladesh by November 2023. Source: <https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/rohingya-emergency>

⁶ Source: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/108033>

⁷ Source: <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends>

How HEKS/EPER Responds – the Humanitarian Aid Strategy

As a member of the international community, HEKS/EPER is committed to the humanitarian imperative, which includes the right to receive and give humanitarian assistance. Recognising that local and national actors are the primary duty-bearers for the provision of such assistance, HEKS/EPER intervenes in settings where government and civil society do not fulfil their duty to meet people's basic needs in crises. Humanitarian aid will be provided in countries where HEKS/EPER has been present before a crisis, and operations will be started in additional countries if needs on the ground justify doing so and HEKS/EPER can get the necessary partners, expertise and funds.

HEKS/EPER's humanitarian interventions cover assistance after disasters due to natural hazards, in fragile and war-torn contexts and other crises such as epidemics or pandemics, from the first stages of an emergency and in protracted crises whenever and wherever needed. People affected by crises are supported in 7 out of 11 humanitarian clusters⁸ through a **needs-based, conflict-sensitive, and principled approach**⁹. HEKS/EPER sets up adequate structures and expertise to support the most affected and vulnerable people in crisis – many of them in hard-to-reach areas, cut off from services and livelihood opportunities, and barely assisted by humanitarian actors.

HEKS/EPER applies the **triple nexus**, which considers both linear aspects (continuum) and the need to flexibly switch and collaborate between humanitarian aid, development, and peacebuilding efforts (contiguum). Before a crisis hits or intensifies, requiring a humanitarian response, local partners are supported to enhance their anticipatory, absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacities and assets. Simultaneously, HEKS/EPER maintains a necessary contingency for quick and adequate humanitarian responses. In its humanitarian interventions, HEKS/EPER is programming exit strategies and implementing respective measures early. This includes building actions for sustainability and strengthening local resilience capacities and assets.

In humanitarian aid, applying the cross-cutting commitment 'Conflict Sensitivity' is key. Building on this, HEKS/EPER makes an informed decision on the extent to which peacebuilding efforts can be included. In displacement situations, this includes permanent analysis considering the way the host community is addressed and involved. HEKS/EPER has been broadly applying a **diapaxis approach**, which has proved to be an effective tool for strengthening social cohesion, conflict transformation skills and building peace. Furthermore, HEKS/EPER fosters synergies through knowledge sharing, and joint programming of GC staff responsible for humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, and church cooperation activities.

Where external conditions allow (e.g., functioning banking system and competitive markets), **cash-based approaches** are the preferred implementation methods as they allow recipients greater flexibility and dignity.

Disasters and humanitarian crises often result in massive destruction of private and public infrastructure and means of livelihood. Communities and local authorities are usually not resilient enough to anticipate and independently recover. Therefore, HEKS/EPER provides humanitarian assistance beyond relief. For more effective rehabilitation, the most affected and most vulnerable groups are supported to enhance their livelihoods, and private houses and public infrastructure are reconstructed. HEKS/EPER emphasises 'building back better' in all reconstruction projects, ensuring that the rehabilitated infrastructure can withstand a future disaster. Preference is given to locally available and environmentally friendly construction materials and traditional construction technologies, which will be improved where required. Ownership of households is increased by applying owner-driven approaches and flexible construction designs, coupled with technical support and capacity building, to ensure high-quality buildings. For HEKS/EPER, being accountable in its humanitarian response implies different aspects, such as integrating its activities into the local response architecture. It is considered indispensable to take an active stand, both through the alignment of activities with government and UN plans and coordination efforts, and through reporting on its response.

HEKS/EPER takes the necessary measures to ensure local acceptance of its presence and activities in any of its humanitarian interventions. This means ensuring that the local context is known, and people, actors and their territories and institutions are treated with respect. For that purpose, the cross-cutting commitments to Conflict Sensitivity, Environmental Safeguarding, Gender, Equality & Diversity, and Strengthening Civil Society must be mainstreamed into any humanitarian response. In the strategy 2025-28, particular attention will be paid to aspects

⁸ HEKS/EPER HA is active in the clusters WASH, Shelter, Protection, Health, Food Security, Education, and Early Recovery.

⁹ HEKS/EPER's actions are subject to the imperative to follow and be perceived as following the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, as well as the Sphere and Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS).

brought up by the current debates about 'Greening Humanitarian Aid' to prevent and mitigate the risks of negative environmental impact caused by HEKS/EPER's presence and activities and continue supporting local actors and communities through the different outcomes of this strategy to strengthen their resilience and practices that respect the environment. Equally important is that people's and local actors' ownership is supported throughout the project cycle and that HEKS/EPER fulfils and is perceived to fulfil its accountability and duty of care towards local teams, partners, and the people it works with.

In line with its commitment to **locally-led programming**, HEKS/EPER aims to plan and implement its humanitarian assistance with strong local ownership and leadership through equitable partnerships based on complementarity. To determine the best-suited implementation modality, it evaluates on a case-by-case basis the necessary speed and scale of the response, the options for fair sharing of risks, the capacities available at the given moment and how localisation priorities can best be balanced with the imperative to fulfil people's right to receive humanitarian assistance. Based on these considerations, partial and full direct implementation remains an option under circumstances where this is assessed to be the most effective modality to serve urgent needs to a degree that outweighs the benefits of implementation through local partners.

At the same time, HEKS/EPER recognises the fact that people affected by crises are often the first responders who have great knowledge of the local context and stay beyond emergency response and recovery efforts supported by international actors. Tested during its Whole-of-Ukraine response, **survivor- and community-led response (sclr)** is a promising approach for empowering people to respond themselves to the needs that they jointly assess as priorities. These considerations emphasise the importance of strengthening civil society and advocating for civic space through long-term processes best supported through development cooperation, which will provide a more fertile ground for a localised humanitarian response when a crisis hits. At the same time, sclr is also an option to strengthen local capacities during a humanitarian response.

Forced displacement

The corporate Strategy 23-27 includes 'Displacement and Migration', as one of the organisation's priorities. Global Cooperation (GC) has focused on internally displaced persons and refugees, and in a few cases also supported migrants who were part of a mixed international migration flow. They receive support for needs and issues directly related to their displacement. GC's support for displaced people can be structured along three lines:

- Almost all GC projects address root causes of migration or displacement and reduce the pressure to migrate or flee for target populations. GC is not aiming at reducing the number of people migrating but considers migration as a livelihood option, which may, if well-managed, bring advantages for migrants, host countries and countries of origin. Improved income can help people who would like to migrate or feel the need to flee from persecution or other high risks but cannot afford it, to do so. HEKS/EPER rather aims to support people to improve their living conditions and to access info creating better decision-making.
- HEKS/EPER covers the basic needs of displaced persons and host communities through humanitarian assistance.
- Where the context allows, HEKS/EPER supports displaced persons and returnees as well as host communities in the search for durable solutions, i.e., sustainable inclusion in their country or place of origin, in a host country, or a third country.

Apart from balancing localisation priorities and the humanitarian imperative, HEKS/EPER ensures the respect and implementation of its global **safeguarding and accountability policies** – e.g., through the establishment of functioning Feedback and Complaint Response Mechanisms (FCRM) and with measures to ensure child safeguarding and Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) in every humanitarian response in line with CHS.

Linked to its operations, HEKS/EPER addresses, jointly with rights-holders, duty-bearers and other relevant actors, the need to consider people's right to receive necessary assistance, and aspects that hinder the implementation of humanitarian assistance in an effective, efficient, and principled way. Examples, where advocacy is needed, include limited access to people in need, attempts to undermine the strict use of needs-based and vulnerability criteria for selecting project

participants and type of support, or other measures affecting procurement, licensing, or other operational necessities. Such advocacy efforts are carried out in a conflict-sensitive way, respecting humanitarian principles.

Where HEKS/EPER Works

HEKS/EPER responds to humanitarian crises, where HEKS/EPER is already present with a development cooperation office and in additional countries, if needs on the ground justify doing so and if the national government and civil society cannot assist crisis-affected populations. The following map shows the **21 countries** where

HEKS/EPER provided its main humanitarian aid activities in 2023. Most of these interventions were linked to humanitarian aid provided in 2022. The crisis that occurred in 2023 in countries where we have not provided in 2022 were the refugees from Nagorno Karabakh, the war in Gaza, and the pastoral lean season in Niger. In other countries, new crises came on top of or after a previous crisis. Examples are Haiti with an earthquake, drought and floods accompanied by the political crisis and cholera epidemic, Syria with the earthquake hitting Türkiye and Syria in February 2022, and Myanmar with displacements due to conflicts in Northern and Southern Shan State, amongst others.



The main humanitarian interventions in 2023, the Ukraine intervention in 5 countries and the humanitarian projects in DRC, Syria, Venezuela, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, and Haiti, had the largest humanitarian portfolios. New crises emerged in Gaza/Israel and Armenia.

Promising Practices Worldwide

Enhancing nexus programming in and for humanitarian response

Based on the 2019 'OECD-DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus' and its own analysis, HEKS/EPER developed its own [Guideline](#) in 2022, 'The Triple Nexus in HEKS/EPER Programmes', combining Humanitarian Aid, Development Cooperation, and Peacebuilding. The aim is to effectively reduce people's needs, risks, and vulnerabilities supporting prevention efforts and addressing key drivers of conflict. To this end, both linear aspects (continuum) and the need to flexibly switch and collaborate between humanitarian aid, development, and peacebuilding efforts (contiguum) are considered.

Before a crisis hits or intensifies, requiring a humanitarian response, HEKS/EPER supports its local partners to enhance their anticipatory, absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacities and assets. Simultaneously, HEKS/EPER maintains a necessary contingency for quick and adequate humanitarian responses. In its humanitarian interventions, HEKS/EPER is programming exit strategies and implementing respective measures early. This includes building actions for sustainability and strengthening local resilience capacities and assets.

In 2023, 28.5% or 67 projects out of 235, contained nexus components (20% in 2022, or 45 out of 234 projects). The increase reflects the endeavours of country offices to embrace the nexus approach. Most projects linked

HA to DC and vice-versa but contain increasingly **peacebuilding** components, e.g., fostering social cohesion between host and refugee communities or minority and mainstream society.

In DRC, HEKS/EPER has been implementing **a three-pronged approach** consisting of (1) monitoring of population displacement and rapid response; (2) road rehabilitation through cash-for-work and financial and technical training of Local Road Maintenance Committees accompanied by WASH activities, providing for better humanitarian access to hard-to-reach areas and recovery of the local economy; (3) relaunch of fish farming and agriculture through the rehabilitation of ponds and food and seeds distribution as well as agricultural training for improved food security and economic autonomy. The contribution to peacebuilding, although being highlighted less prominently, lies in diapraxis through cash-for-work, reducing safety risks along rehabilitated roads, and better economic opportunities that contributed to people returning to their villages, taking up commercial relationships and reducing the risk of recruitment into armed groups.

Economic inclusion of war-affected people and refugees

In several countries, humanitarian response shifted from emergency response including cash, shelter and other rapid support, towards inclusion of refugees. In **Armenia**, HEKS/EPER shifted to a 13-month project for skills development and economic inclusion of refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh when the immediate shelter and cash needs were met to a certain degree.

Similar inclusion efforts were made in **Romania** and **Moldova** with refugees from Ukraine. Legal and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) in Moldova helped participants address the challenges and risks they faced due to their displacement and contributed to stronger social cohesion. In Uganda, where refugees are allowed to receive and cultivate a plot of land, more specific conflict transformation efforts have been paired with improving economic self-reliance and, where needed, with cash assistance.

In 2023, HEKS/EPER played a significant role in setting up and supporting a Surprise Soap business in **Syria**. Based on successful cases in other countries and to strengthen the local economy, HEKS/EPER identified a company in Damascus to produce a soap containing a toy which bears potential for improved hygiene practices. HEKS/EPER has been promoting the product with multilateral agencies that are now procuring surprise soap through this supplier.

In the response to the crisis in **Venezuela**, elements of a nexus programming beyond emergency support can be seen in the support of vocational training in agriculture where the use of biological inputs for income generation and improved infrastructure keep inspiring students, and in training and linking up vulnerable small farmers with social canteens that became buyers of part of their production.

Coordinating nexus projects

The implementation of the triple nexus requires collaboration, coherence, and complementarity within interventions and between different actors such as communities, and authorities, and between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors. In humanitarian response, it is often challenging to ensure effective coordination amongst different humanitarian actors and even beyond. For HEKS/EPER, being accountable in its humanitarian response implies different aspects, such as integrating its activities into the local response architecture. It is considered indispensable to take an active stand, both through the alignment of activities with government and UN plans and coordination efforts, and through reporting on its response. In some contexts, HEKS/EPER showed particular investment in coordination in 2023. In **DRC** The Rapid-Response Mechanism (RRM) implemented with MEDAIR was extended to South Kivu and allowed HEKS/EPER to share 54 alerts about population displacement with the humanitarian coordination in 2023. In the context of the Rohingya crisis, HEKS/EPER holds a coordinating role as a shelter focal point in three camps in **Bangladesh** and improves transitional shelters, stairs and other common infrastructure. For several years, HEKS/EPER has made sustained efforts to strengthen coordination among actors intervening in Grand'Anse through proactive sharing and encouraging others to join the effort consistently.

Crisis modifiers proved to be an effective measure for development projects to respond to sudden humanitarian needs. In 2023, the FOSTER project made use of this flexibility to respond to displacement in Southern and Northern Shan states in Myanmar.

HEKS/EPER's efforts to strengthen the triple nexus include supporting communities and local partners to enhance their anticipatory, absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacities and assets for peace and resilience. This

helps them face ongoing crises and reduce the burden of increasing humanitarian needs from slow—and sudden-onset disasters and conflicts.

Greening humanitarian aid and market-based solutions enhancing sustainability

As part of its accountability, vision and mission, HEKS/EPER aims to ensure that risks of harming its projects are being mitigated and its projects contribute to sustainable outcomes.

For that purpose, HEKS/EPER is, for example, monitoring its air travel and has taken action to reduce emissions from such and other activities. In the Global Cooperation Strategy 2025-28, HEKS committed to pay particular attention to aspects brought up by the current debates about 'Greening Humanitarian Aid' to improve its own efforts to prevent and mitigate the risks of negative environmental impact caused through HEKS/EPER's presence and activities and continue supporting local actors and communities to strengthen their resilience and practices that respect the environment. For that, HEKS/EPER's priority efforts include supporting climate justice and adaptation and securing rights and access to land and food, and it introduced environmental safeguarding as a cross-cutting commitment and set up the Green Office Challenge for its launching in early 2024. Examples of green programming include equipping bakeries the organization rehabilitates in Syria with solar power, doing the same for HEKS/EPER country offices, applying its Field Financial and Administrative Guidelines (FFAG) and related regulations, as well as sticking to humanitarian standards and applying tools such as NEAT+ and CEDRIG.

Contributing to sustainable outcomes through humanitarian aid goes beyond environmental dimensions and can include efforts such as supporting market-based solutions.

Survivor- and community-led crisis response (sclr) for meaningful localisation

GC started piloting sclr in **Hungary** in 2022 in collaboration with Christian Aid and the [Local to Global Protection initiative](#) to enable meaningful localisation. In 2023 further experience has been gained in **Romania, Moldova, Ukraine** and **Armenia**. sclr is an innovative approach to support locally-led humanitarian action at the grassroots level. Both existing community-based groups and collective initiatives suggested by people with a common interest in responding to a crisis are identified and empowered through microgrants and other support. The community microgrants are designed by the affected communities and project participants themselves, responding to self-identified needs otherwise uncovered by other types of humanitarian interventions. In contrast to simple cash grants, they are treated as group cash grants, for which the community holds primary accountability during the project cycle and is directly involved and responsible for implementing their initiatives. Reporting requirements are adapted to the capacities of these groups and avoid disproportionate effort compared to the implementation of the respective project. Community facilitators play an important role in mobilizing interest at the grassroots level and accompanying and facilitating interlinkages between the different awardees.

Sclr requires a **shift of power** and letting go of some control over project results by handing over responsibilities to the people affected by a crisis and letting them become active in what they consider as their priorities.

The 10 Guiding Principles of sclr

- 1) Communities are the first and last responders to crisis.
- 2) How external actors engage with people in crisis affects how they behave and respond.
- 3) All communities have rich knowledge, skills and insights to respond to crisis and long-term vulnerabilities.
- 4) Given the chance, communities respond to crises holistically, unconstrained by humanitarian and development divides, and looking to long-term resilience.
- 5) Locally led response can be much faster and more cost-efficient than conventional aid or humanitarian interventions.
- 6) Strengthening psychosocial wellbeing is crucial to recovery.
- 7) Crisis response is strengthened when women and other marginalised groups are also given a chance to lead.
- 8) Local agency and accountability require local ownership and mutual trust.
- 9) Innovation and learning require a safe-to-fail environment.
- 10) Social connection and cohesion strengthen crisis response and resilience.

Source: <https://www.local2global.info/sclr/guiding-principles/>

In 2023, HEKS/EPER launched a capitalization process to capture and disseminate the knowledge it has gained with the sclr approach. The process should lead to the drafting of a learning paper which aims at recording key insights, providing guidance for future sclr projects and contributing to the global sclr knowledge base. The paper will soon be available and shared with interested actors.

Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA)



Cash for Work to maintain roads in DRC – important source of income for conflict-affected people, and key to communities to access markets, health care, schools, etc.

In 2023, HEKS/EPER ran **cash programmes in 14 countries** (12 in 2022), mostly in response to situations of conflict and displacement linked to wars and conflicts in Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Israel/Palestine, and DRC)¹⁰. Other contexts were crises due to sudden and slow-onset disasters and desert locust invasion¹¹. These used different disbursement modalities such as direct cash, mobile money, bank checks, payments through banks and vouchers. The intervention changed from cash in hand to online transfers thanks to monitoring, learning and adaptation in Romania. While HEKS/EPER has been applying both unconditional and conditional cash approaches, there has been a considerable shift towards unconditional cash in recent years. Conditional cash trans-

fers have proven to be a vehicle to promote social cohesion between host and refugee communities. Locals and refugees have participated in joint activities to improve the living conditions for both communities. Cash for work (CfW) has also been implemented in other contexts mostly to serve community rehabilitation works. Another type of conditionality was for the economic inclusion of refugees in Romania. People who presented a business plan for their business were eligible for an entrepreneurial grant and employees for an employment kit containing clothes they selected individually. A few projects involved restrictions on participants' options when using the money (for specific products, providers or activities). When unrestricted cash is judged the best option, participants have the most freedom to decide how they want to use the money, which gives them decision power. sclr implied that granting was eligible for informal groups applying with their project proposal which can be considered as a conditional and restricted CVA that nevertheless gives them agency to collectively respond to their needs which would traditionally be done by other actors with a stronger say in what should be the focus of a response.

A quick but sound market analysis is required to decide on the appropriate cash method, if at all. It is often most effective to cleverly combine the cash approach with other activities and approaches and link it to pre-conditions. HEKS/EPER has integrated post-distribution monitoring (PDM) into its cash and voucher assistance, mainly, but not only, analysing what the money is used for by participants and their level of satisfaction and feedback.

HEKS/EPER recognises that communities and survivors are mostly the first responders to a humanitarian crisis. Based on the learnings of Local to Global Protection (L2GP) and in collaboration with Christian Aid, the survivor and community-led response (sclr) methodology has been piloted along with Flexible Small Grants and other types of support in the Whole of Ukraine response (see page 7/8, promising practice sclr).

In 2023, HEKS/EPER developed and tested a questionnaire for its Key Indicator on CVA. The aim is to better harmonize analysis and reporting and generate further learning in this field. The questionnaire will be reviewed in 2024 for further development where necessary.

¹⁰ CVA linked to conflicts and displacement were implemented in Ukraine, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, Armenia, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Gaza, Ethiopia, DRC, and Uganda.

¹¹ Responding to needs following earthquakes in Türkiye/Syria and Haiti. In the latter, the earthquake was only one element of a multiple crisis, including almost simultaneous floods following a long drought, cholera and a persisting political and economic crisis. In Syria, the earthquake impacted people already affected by the consequences of years of war and natural hazards. In Ethiopia, drought and desert locust invasion added to the impacts of conflicts requiring humanitarian aid.

Achievements & Perspectives

Achievements 2023 – Data

HEKS/EPER's humanitarian aid expenses have seen a sharp increase since 2020. Development cooperation, development policy, and church cooperation have also seen a (minor) increase in the same period. In 2022 and 2023, HEKS/EPER's humanitarian aid had, for the first time, a larger financial volume than its development cooperation. This goes hand in hand with the growing numbers of people in need of humanitarian aid and the less rapidly increasing funding on a global level. The increased funds could mainly be raised through more grants from a more diverse, mostly bilateral and multilateral donor partnership basis.

In 2023, HEKS/EPER contributed with **117 projects and 38.05 million CHF** to its Outcome 1 'Basic Needs in Crises Covered' reaching directly **3,391,213 people in 21 countries**. 1,153,096 individuals were reached indirectly. 89 projects were managed as **humanitarian projects, spending 44.88 million CHF**. The deviation in the number of projects and net expenditure is due to the increasing application of the **Triple Nexus**. DC projects contribute increasingly to Outcome 1, and HA projects embrace the other three GC Outcomes linking to development and/or peacebuilding (see above, page 5).

Main intervention areas

Syria, where GC covered the humanitarian needs of 1,674,081 (direct) project participants, spending 3,228,363 CHF on Outcome 1. The **Whole-of-Ukraine** response in Ukraine, Romania, Moldova, Hungary and Czech Republic reached 215,835 people with 15,724,867 CHF. In **DR Congo**, GC reached out to 522'559 conflict-affected people, partially displaced in hard-to-reach areas with 10,581,217 CHF. In **Venezuela**, suffering from economic, political and security crises, 518'774 people were assisted with 1,682,933 CHF. 298,600 people in **Haiti** suffering from violence, disasters, a deteriorating economy and a collapsing state were supported with 610,727 CHF. Conflict and climate change affected **Bangladesh** and **Ethiopia** continued to assist not only with DC projects but serving about 100'000 people with humanitarian activities, and spending almost 4 M CHF on Outcome 1. With its new regional programme **Uganda/South Sudan**, the intervention shifted in 2023 towards DC, with the remaining 7000 people profiting from HA. To the emerging humanitarian Gaza crises in **Israel/Palestine** GC answered by assisting 15'000 people already in the last months of 2023.



HEKS/EPER supports Armenian refugees forced out of Nagorno-Karabakh with shelter, food, and economic inclusion efforts.

Cash and Voucher Assistance

In 2023, humanitarian projects in **14 countries did cash programming**, accounting for more than 10.2 M CHF spent, or **26%** (2022: 17.5 %) of the global spending contributing to Outcome 1 of HEKS/EPER's GC Strategy. The ratio is higher than in 2022, almost reaching the target 2023 of 30% and the cash volume of 27.2% in 2021. CVA has been the main approach supporting people in crisis areas in Armenia, Hungary, Israel/Palestine, Moldova, Myanmar, and Romania, reaching ratios up to 100%. High absolute volumes were reached in DRC and Ukraine.

Countries where CVA was not the best option for supporting the people in need, with either cash or debit card systems unavailable or people on the move, the distribution of emergency goods or providing shelter still were the best possible intervention activities (e.g., Bangladesh, Syria, Haiti, or Ethiopia).

Countries	Project Participants (Overall)		Outcome 1 net expenses CHF	Project Participants (CVA)		Volume Cash & Voucher Assistance	
	direct	indirect		direct	indirect	CHF	%
Armenia	1,321	2,642	151,008	1,321	2,642	150,000	99
Bangladesh	57,579	3,328	1,716,128	832	3,328	108,975	6
Czech Republic	200	600	45,383	0	0	0	0
DR Congo	522,559	616,620	10,581,217	227,168	94,745	2,985,885	28
Ethiopia	42,402	15,121	2,143,632	19,801	15,121	385,316	18
Haiti	298,600	370,000	610,727	3,751	18,755	65,243	11
Honduras	152	0	16,869	0	0	0	0
Hungary	1,271	5,900	583,213	929	5,900	1,035,472**	100**
Iraq	1,305	4,500	545,012	0	0	0	0
Israel / Palestine	15,000	15,000	133,316	6,000	15,000	198,000**	100**
Lebanon	60	60	120,063	0	0	0	0
Moldova	38,298	9,614	761,965	3,398	9,614	425,054	56
Myanmar	15,266	0	146,131	9,573	0	132,880	91
Niger	20400	0	114,305	120	0	7,300	6
Romania	50108	11197	1,096,348	2,394	11,197	632,716	58
Serbia	833	1,200	20,884	0	0	0	0
South Sudan	4321	0	83,761	0	0	0	0
Syria	1674081	3886	3,228,363	983	3,886	233,932	7
Uganda	2725	6076	299,046	2,330	6,076	62,457	21
Ukraine	125958	87352	13,237,958	19,333	4,172	3,836,050	29
Venezuela	518774	0	1,682,933	0	0	0	0
Global Projects*	0	0	663,840	0	0	0	0
Financial Adjustments	0	0	62,197	0	0	0	0
Total	3,391,213	1,153,096	38,047,297	297,933	190,436	10,232,280	26%

* Regional 'Whole of Ukraine' activities and global projects supporting HA implementation.

** CVA contributed not only to Outcome 1 but also to the other three GC Outcomes.

GC spent in 21 countries 38 M on Outcome 1 reaching 4,544,309 people. 26 % of the assistance was provided with cash/voucher.

The organisation has been working in 13 of the 60 **fragile states** listed in the OECD's 'States of Fragility Report': Bangladesh, Cambodia, DR Congo, Honduras, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Haiti, Iraq, Niger, South Sudan, Syria, Uganda, and Venezuela. HEKS/EPER has intervened through development and humanitarian projects in most of these countries. In Ukraine and neighbouring countries, as well as Gaza/Israel and Armenia, HEKS/EPER and its existing development partners, had to quickly adapt their intervention strategy to respond to sudden humanitarian needs either in 2022 or 2023.

Three humanitarian highlights in 2023 were ...

- GC strengthened **locally-led and flexible modalities** of implementation driven by promoting ownership, participation, accountability, and sustainability (refer to 'Promising Practices').

- **Diversified funding partnerships:** Accumulated experience in partnerships, especially with members of the ACT Alliance and accredited partners in BHA and DG ECHO contracts, and HEKS/EPER officially became an implementing partner of BHA and DG ECHO (via HEKS/EPER's Office in Romania) which opens the way to new funding for HA.
- **Futur-oriented humanitarian aid:** GC Strategy 2025-28 with a stronger focus on reaching the most affected and vulnerable people, including in hard-to-reach areas, through principled approaches fostering effectiveness, the triple nexus, localization, mutual accountability, cross-cutting commitments, greening HA, and advocacy.

A selection of notable achievements and learnings in specific countries, complementing the information provided in the section on promising practices, is the following:

- In **Syria** HEKS/EPER was among the first responders to the earthquake providing a multifaceted emergency aid package, that encompassed the following: (1) Shelter and emergency food assistance extended to 600 displaced persons (2) 4869 earthquake-affected persons received cash assistance focusing on women, elderly and disabled people, (3) Rehabilitation of 16 public bakeries resulting in improved access to subsidized bread to 1'350'000 people, (4) Rehabilitation of six water and sanitation infrastructure resulting in enhanced WASH access for 104'500 individuals.



The rehabilitation of 16 bakeries created jobs, income, and increased food security for Syrian population.

- In **Iraq**, COVID recovery classes were massively oversubscribed and extremely popular, especially among IDP and returnee children, with high success rates and very low dropout rates.
- The war in **Gaza** triggered a humanitarian response supporting IDPs in Gaza, people suffering from settler violence in the West Bank, and Negev Bedouin families through the delivery of essential services such as counselling, medical consultations, financial support, water, fodder, and emergency supplies. The work has been delivered by existing DC partners and new partners and included protection and advocacy efforts. The latter happened mainly in Switzerland, in collaboration with partners and with the necessary analysis to build on a needs-based and context-sensitive messaging. As for all humanitarian aid in the current situation in Gaza, humanitarian access has been challenging. Staff had no access to Gaza apart from those already stationed there and for them, movement has been dangerous. This caused delays with agricultural assessments. The selection of participants was based on lists prepared by OCHA. People selected for MPCA have been informed by SMS. They received a code to withdraw the amount and a contact address for complaints and questions. At their convenience, they could withdraw the money from the PalPay agent. To receive the money, they needed to show the code, as well as identify themselves with their national ID card or indicate their national ID card number. For post-distribution monitoring of multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA), the local partner organization had to contact participants by phone, which led to a double effort due to difficulties in accessing and using phone networks.
- In **Ukraine**, HEKS/EPER continued providing humanitarian aid along the frontline and in the Western part of the country. The response achieved a considerable scale, reaching 213'310 individuals through different sectors, thanks to the support of different donors such as BHA with more than 5mio USD, CARE, OXFAM, NCA, SwS, ACT Alliance, ADA, KIA, Neighbor in Need (NIN), amongst others. The total budget amounted to more than 13m CHF.
- Handling of feedback and complaints with the COMPASS digital tool has been assessed as innovative and informative. COMPASS has been piloted in the **Ukraine** country programme where the team is getting from project participants and the communities a few hundred feedbacks/complaints monthly, partly submitted via an online KOBO form. It has shown to be efficient in tracking and handling feedback, as well as automating registration of feedback submitted online. A new version of COMPASS, tailored to HEKS/EPER's needs is being developed and expected to be rolled out in more countries in 2024, and in all country offices in 2025.

- In **Armenia**, where HEKS/EPER has been active with a development programme for many years but lacks experience with humanitarian aid, the organization joined forces with our existing local partners and was among the first humanitarian aid providers with a comprehensive response including MPCA, shelter support and access to school, food, hygiene, medicine, and psychosocial support. In the third month, a 13-month project with a financial volume of 1.5m CHF could be launched to promote social cohesion through sclr and economic inclusion. Many refugees were self-employed rural workers who needed new skills. The project started providing skills training on IT and AI, after having conducted a market assessment.
- In Bidi Bidi, **Uganda**, HEKS/EPER managed to support farmers with postharvest handling equipment, fruit tree seedlings, boost capital for off-farm businesses, training in bucket drip irrigation, cash grants to farmer groups and to be managed as a revolving fund. 82.95% of project participants reported increased income in 2023. The training on rights and conflict transformation led to more community-led initiatives for equality and non-violent conflict transformation. Advocacy, awareness creation, and support to neighbourhood assemblies and peace groups contributed to better access to basic services and less conflict among refugees and host communities.
- In **Bangladesh** Rohingya refugees have no access to the labour market and depend on HA. HEKS/EPER provides site improvement. Refugees have been employed in cash for work projects with a government fixed rate and providing benefits to 11'000 people. This allows injecting cash into the camps. They covered 11'000 individuals, people benefitting indirectly. Refugees have no access to the banking system and are not allowed to own SIM cards. To function within these restrictions, hard cash has been distributed weekly.
- The WASH FIT approach was implemented in **Bangladesh** and **Venezuela**, whereas in DRC the WASH strategy was shifted from building latrines to Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) and using CGI sheets instead of wood in areas where the latter is scarce aiming at more ownership and sustainability. In Bangladesh, the WASH approach was comprehensive, including advocacy, capacity building, equipment and infrastructural support to Health Care Facilities and health education sessions at girls' schools to improve WASH and health services.

Perspectives

The humanitarian situation worldwide, and specifically in countries with GC activities, is constantly monitored, and preparedness measures are being taken to the extent possible, embracing the nexus approach while programming. HEKS/EPER will respond to new major natural or man-made disasters in countries without yet more likely with its previous presence with ongoing humanitarian or development programmes.

In 2024, the Ukraine response (including Romania and Moldova), Bangladesh, Venezuela, DRC, Uganda, Ethiopia, Armenia and the Middle East will remain core humanitarian action areas of HEKS/EPER.

In terms of strategic priorities, HEKS/EPER is in the last year of its Global Cooperation Strategy 2021-2024. It will focus on ensuring that the remaining priorities of its Global Cooperation Strategy 2021-2024 will be addressed adequately. Simultaneously, preparations for what was defined in the next Strategy will be done. The main priorities will be:

- Stick to a principled approach and constantly adapt it to new requirements.
- Commit to serve the most vulnerable in remote, hard-to-reach areas.
- Further implement sclr projects for meaningful localization of humanitarian aid at the grassroots level, contribute to the further development of that approach and engage in other priorities of the localization agenda.
- Pilot and upscale other innovative approaches, such as in the field of CVA, protection, market-based approaches, locally-led approaches, diapraxis circular reconstruction, etc.
- Foster green response at HEKS/EPER along the lines defined in the new Global Cooperation Strategy.
- Further strengthen the triple nexus approach across the organization.
- Continue developing governance, compliance & accountability, with regards to safeguarding, PSEAH, environmental sustainability, FCRM, risk management, controlling, FFAG, etc.

This is HEKS/EPER

HEKS/EPER is the aid organisation of the Swiss protestant churches. It operates in four fields – Climate Justice, Inclusion, Right to Land & Food, Displacement & Migration – towards a more just, equitable and peaceful world with resilient communities.

In 2023, HEKS/EPER Switzerland supported with 45 programmes in 15 Swiss cantons inclusion of 133'000 people. HEKS/EPER Global Cooperation (GC) supported in 37 countries with 235 projects, 7.13 million people directly in economic, social or humanitarian need, and 9.5 million indirectly.

The operating corporate income of the whole organisation has risen to 137.28 M CHF and expenditure to 138.49 M CHF – of which 75.03 M CHF (2022: 54.54 M CHF) were costs spent for the global programme.

GC spent 28.09 M CHF (net costs) on Development Cooperation ameliorating the life of 3.688.478 people. It promoted politics and practices enabling sustainable systems change and implemented 98 development projects with a focus on right/access to land and resources, fostering sustainable agricultural production, climate mitigation/adaptation, peaceful societies, and socio-economic inclusion. 7.774.356 people benefitted indirectly, e.g., through successful advocacy for new rights or policies.

In 2023, HEKS/EPER reached 3.391.213 people directly with its 89 humanitarian projects in 21 countries and net expenses of 44.88 M CHF, and 1.153.096 individuals were reached indirectly.

In the frame of Church Cooperation, with 21 projects and 2.06 M CHF GC supported social and humanitarian work of Reformed Churches in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, reaching out to 47'232 people directly – another 522'048 were reached indirectly.

HEKS/EPER sensitises the needs and rights of people and communities worldwide, addressing causes of global inequalities and possible solutions. To inform the public, media, politics and other stakeholders in Switzerland to achieve a transition to a more equitable, peaceful world, preserving the limited natural resources, HEKS/EPER spent worldwide with 25 projects and in Switzerland with communication and sensitisation efforts 5.26 M CHF on advocacy and policy work. HEKS/EPER builds and maintains links to partners, alliances and networks in Switzerland and worldwide to ensure outreach.

Global Cooperation and its 150 operational partners strive towards a systems change with its human rights-based approach, promoting locally-led solutions, the communities' ownership, innovation, and the nexus between humanitarian aid, development activities and peacebuilding endeavours. Jointly with proficient partners and well-connected alliances, HEKS/EPER fosters constant dialogue between civil society, the private sector, and Government actors. It enables people and communities to participate and advocate for their needs and rights.

GC applies risk-informed, evidence-based, conflict—and gender-sensitive, results-oriented, adaptive programming. A transparent governance and compliance framework with high safeguarding and management standards ensures accountability and monitors and evaluates whether our projects have an effective impact and add value for the people we collaborate with.

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

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


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und Zusammenarbeit DEZA**

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