

HEKS/EPER Thematic Factsheet 2024 & Report 2023



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EPER**
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Non-Discrimination and Inclusion

HEKS/EPER Global Cooperation's strategy, promising practices, achievements, and perspectives on overcoming economic, social, and political discrimination to empower the most vulnerable.

Zürich/Lausanne/Bern, June 2024

Why Non-Discrimination & Inclusion Matter

Global Challenges – the Context

Over the last decades, significant progress in terms of poverty reduction and human development has been achieved worldwide. Nevertheless, **many groups remained excluded** from this positive trend. The COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, plus the deteriorating civic space¹, climate change and environmental challenges, disputed rights and access to land and natural resources, growing multidimensional poverty² and food crises alarmingly escalating in 2023³. A total of **1.1 billion people live in acute multi-dimensional poverty**, affecting mainly rural areas, with 84% of all poor. This reality of increased fragility is reflected in all 18 non-European HEKS/EPER priority countries that rank low in this deteriorating Human Development Index, from Brazil (87th place) to South Sudan (191st place). And even better-ranked HEKS/EPER countries lost ground in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Multiple sources provide evidence that **inequality is still increasing** worldwide.⁴ Inequality has high economic costs and may also jeopardise political stability and peace. According to the UNDP, based on its Human Development Indicator, inequality concerning the fulfilment of fundamental rights, discrimination, and absolute economic inequality are on the rise and remains a key obstacle to enhancing sustainable livelihood opportunities. More than 75% of households live in societies where income is more unequally distributed than in 1990. Overall, **women's share** of total incomes from labour income neared 30% in 1990 but made only slow progress and stands at less than 35% today.

The increased nationalism and authoritarianism that took root in many countries as responses to insecurity, terrorism, and financial crises led to growing hostility, discrimination, and stigmatisation of certain groups and civil society actors. Hundreds of millions are being forced into poverty, losing their jobs, facing hunger, providing unpaid care, and lacking access to education, healthcare, protective gear, and vaccination, while many of the richest – individuals and corporations – are thriving⁵.

The Global Inequality Report 2022 shows evidence that income and wealth inequalities have been rising nearly everywhere since 1980, following a series of deregulation and liberalisation programmes which took different forms in different countries. Certain countries experienced spectacular increases in inequality, while others experienced relatively smaller rises. Over the past 40 years, private persons or enterprises in countries have become significantly richer, but their **governments have become poorer**. The share of wealth held by public actors is close to zero or negative in rich countries, meaning wealth is in private hands, leaving politics and the public with less funds to invest in the future.

Moreover, the report emphasises the **growing ecological inequality** and the related data evidencing that inequalities are not just a rich vs poor country issue but rather a high emitters vs low emitters issue within all countries. Current crises like the pandemic, climate change and wars hit an already profoundly unequal world and will further exacerbate poverty, exclusion and discrimination. Exclusion and discrimination are based on the membership of people to a particular group or category, like geographic location, remoteness, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, migratory status, social group, age or disability. Poverty, inequality, discrimination and exclusion are not the same. However, social exclusion and discrimination are often interrelated with poverty. Social inclusion, focusing on the participation of all people in society and equal rights no matter their group's belonging, complements the concept of poverty, which focuses more on (socio-economic) disparities between people. Discrimination, in turn, is anchored in the prejudiced perception of individuals based on their membership to a particular group or category. It involves behaviours towards groups, such as excluding or restricting members of

¹ The Civicus Monitor tracking civic space: <https://monitor.civicus.org/>

² 2023 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index Report: <https://hdr.undp.org/content/2023-global-multidimensional-poverty-index-mpi#/indicies/MPI>

³ WFP: A Global Food Crises: <https://www.wfp.org/global-hunger-crisis>

⁴ The richest 10% of the global population takes 52% of global income, and the poorest 50% earns 8.5% of it. The top 10% own 76% of global wealth, while the bottom half saw only 2%. World Inequality Report 2022: <https://wir2022.wid.world/executive-summary/>

⁵ OXFAM, 2021: The inequality virus.

one group from opportunities that are available to others⁶. Discrimination is not only about what is being explicitly said in public but also implicit messages and practices and what is not being said or done. Worldwide experience of the past years shows that empowerment and access to services for excluded people are not enough. However, changing structures and fighting discrimination against excluded groups is inevitable to achieve de facto inclusive societies. Or, as the Inequality Report 2022 states, discrimination and inequality are not inevitable but a political choice. Therefore, many actors decided to incorporate inclusion and non-discrimination in their agendas. For example, the Roma inclusion strategy of the European Union focuses on fighting discrimination, monitoring and investigating discrimination, harassment and hate crime, providing redress to victims as well as raising awareness of discrimination, stigmas and prejudices.

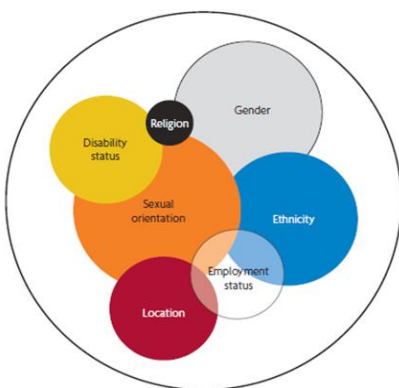
Equality and discrimination

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

Over and above, inclusion, non-discrimination and equality are deep-seated in the international legal framework and key priorities of the actual international development discourse. Reducing inequality and creating inclusive policies are the core of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **'Leave no one behind'** is the central principle of the 17 SDGs. Number 16 calls for peaceful and inclusive societies, and SDG 10 demands a reduction of 'inequality within and between countries, with target 10.2 referring explicitly to inclusion and target 10.3. to discrimination. The SDGs demand to work with and for the most difficult-to-reach groups, which often face not only poverty but also exclusion and discrimination related to location, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, age or disability status. The international human rights legal framework contains various international instruments⁷ to combat specific forms of discrimination.

How HEKS/EPER Responds – the GC Strategy

Inclusion and non-discrimination have been and continue to be at the core of HEKS/EPER's worldwide engagement. As anchored in the current HEKS/EPER international programme strategy, the overall vision of HEKS/EPER's development cooperation activities is to contribute to more equitable, peaceful and resilient societies by facilitating systemic change in land and natural resources governance and overcoming social, political and economic discrimination. Moreover, HEKS/EPER is committed to the human rights-based approach (HRBA) based on participation, equality and non-discrimination and strongly focuses on the most vulnerable. All endeavours aim to ensure equal rights, equal opportunities, active participation and dignity of people and communities excluded based on their social group belonging. Group belonging regarding gender or sex, sexual orientation, age, dis(ability), national or another origin, language, religion, socio-economic background and other social categories are interrelated and intersectional (see figure below).



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

For HEKS/EPER, knowing these intersections and considering them when working towards social inclusion and non-discrimination is key. For example, working for and with women and girls in vulnerable communities is often crucial, as they are most affected by inequalities and discrimination. To fight discrimination, HEKS/EPER has to know and support the excluded, left behind and discriminated groups in each country and context. This approach requires a thorough rights-based analysis, as discrimination takes many forms. For example, small-holder farmers are discriminated against in some contexts (e.g., due to *de jure* discrimination or no government services to remote areas, which hinders the communities' access to agro-services and productive resources, such as credit, seeds, land and water). In contrast, they live a simple, equated life in other contexts. Social inclusion encompasses access to basic services (education, health, etc.), land and

⁶ HEKS/EPER 2011 Conflict Transformation Implementation Concept: Equal Rights and Conflict Transformation p.8.

⁷ Instruments to combat [discrimination against indigenous peoples, migrants, minorities, people with disabilities, discrimination against women, ethnic](#) and [religious discrimination](#), or [discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity](#).

resources, labour and markets, social and cultural spaces, and inclusive and participatory governance structures. Combating discrimination is an integral step towards social inclusion. Evidence shows that many efforts towards social inclusion are ineffective as long as discrimination against the excluded groups must be addressed adequately. Thus, HEKS/EPER emphasises deconstructing negative stereotypes, stigmas and prejudices, monitoring and investigating discrimination, raising awareness of discrimination, and facilitating redress for people discriminated against. Experience shows that empowering and raising the voices of those discriminated against is essential, but more is needed to achieve inclusive societies. Thus, HEKS/EPER works with the mainstream society, discriminated communities and duty-bearers to tackle negative stereotypes, improve intergroup relations and fight institutional discrimination. Structural and institutional discrimination at all levels shall be revealed, combated and dismantled. On the other hand, inclusive and non-discriminatory structures and institutions striving for participation, equal opportunities and diversity are promoted.

Striving towards social inclusion of discriminated and marginalised groups⁸ HEKS/EPER works with local NGOs, networks, and movements rooted in, organising, and/or representing these excluded groups. HEKS/EPER aims to strengthen these actors by supporting networking among peer organisations and linking them with regional, national, and international decision-making actors. Building inclusive networks, positive relations, and trust is a long-term process that needs staying power and long-term financing.

Promising Practices Worldwide

Bangladesh – Social, Economic, and Political Inclusion of Dalits and Adibashi

HEKS/EPER Bangladesh prioritises its efforts towards supporting socially and economically vulnerable communities. Among these communities, a particular focus is placed on the Adibashi (ethnic) and Dalit populations, who represent the country's most marginalised. Additionally, HEKS/EPER extended its support to other marginalised communities within mainstream society. A substantial portion of these communities resides in the northern regions of Bangladesh, specifically in the Rangpur and Rajshahi.



Specifically Dalits and Adibashi women are empowered.

The discrimination against Dalits and Adibashi in Bangladesh is manifold and lasting for many generations. Due to the traditional perception of being 'polluted' and/or inferior – partly linked to concepts of religious purity and 'untouchability' –, massive discrimination, lacking respect, aggressive and disgracing behaviour towards them, sneering at their professional activities and cultural practices and a lack of institutional mechanisms are their daily life experience. Through its programme HEKS/EPER **in 2023** reached 12 districts, about **10'000 Dalits**, and more than **40'000 Adibashi directly**, supporting their social, economic and political inclusion. Another **305'000** were reached **indirectly**, benefitting from additional supportive policies. **8'700** project participants belonged to the **mainstream community**, living below the poverty line and being extremely marginalised. To achieve this goal, the Country Office Bangladesh has partnered with local NGOs (ESDO, DASCOH, MJSKS) as implementing partners. The CO was collaborating with UNDP, PET, and CML for strategic and technical partnerships. To ensure the Inclusion of Dalits and Adibashi, GC set the following goals:

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

⁸ In its projects HEKS/EPER is addressing marginalized or discriminated groups such as Roma, Dalit, Adivasi, migrants and refugees, persons with disabilities, children, sick or elderly people, also, indigenous or traditional communities in rural areas.

Romania – Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

Since 2015, HEKS/EPER has been facilitating, together with the local Diakonia, the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Sfântu Gheorghe, Oradea, Bistrița and Reghin City in Romania. Including persons with disabilities is promoted through public awareness raising, personal development workshops, job mediation, protected jobs and shelter homes. Being part of the HEKS/EPER church cooperation, the project also promotes the sensitisation of the church congregations, barrier-free church services, and inclusion of persons with disabilities in church activities. All these initiatives are essential for Romanian society, as people with disabilities are still neglected by many. There is a dire shortage of appropriate facilities, therapy, activities or job opportunities for people with disabilities in the country.

In 2023, about **33'000 people** participated in the three CC projects surrounding inclusion in Romania. HEKS/EPER continued to support the **project for inclusion of people with disabilities (PwD)** carried out by the Christian Foundation Diakonia (CFD) in Sfântu Gheorghe, Reghin, Oradea and Bistrita. Including persons with disabilities is promoted through public awareness raising, personal development workshops, job mediation, protected jobs and shelter homes. The project also promotes the sensitisation of church congregations, barrier-free church services, and inclusion of persons with disabilities in church activities. The project promotes the economic and social inclusion of people with disabilities in the mainstream job market and society: In 2023 the job mediation office in Sfântu Gheorghe supported PwD to find a job and lead self-determined lives. Also, CFD advocated strongly towards authorities as the main duty-bearer and towards the public for the rights of PwD, intending to affect positive change through new deinstitutionalisation and increased state subsidiaries legislation.

Senegal – Support for Traditional Pastoralist Food Systems in the Sahel

The northeastern part of Senegal, called 'Ferlo', is home to semi-nomadic pastoralists. Their **lifestyle and production system** are highly adapted to the Sahel's fragile ecosystem and help sustainably use and conserve it. The remaining pastoralists in Senegal are coming under pressure from various sides: insecure access to land, increased competition over land and the severe effects of climate change are putting their food system and way of life at risk. The pastoralists and their products are poorly integrated into the local and regional economy. Due to the lack of economic opportunities, especially young people leave the communities. Thus, the economic inclusion of the pastoralist communities is crucial to securing the sustainable lifestyle that preserves the fragile ecosystem.



Pastoralist increase their income marketing their own dairy products.

HEKS/EPER's partner organisation is addressing these challenges by working on different levels with the pastoralist communities in the departments Linguère and Ranérou in the Ferlo region. Firstly, support pastoralist communities to secure access to their traditional land by establishing local resource conventions, or embedding pastoralists' rights in laws such as the pastoral code or communal land titles. These legally binding documents, such as the extent of grazing areas and regulating access for the different user groups, are a prerequisite for the pastoralist communities can continue their lifestyle. Income can be improved by including the pastoralists' food systems in local markets. Especially women and youth are producing, processing and marketing dairy products, like yoghurt and butter oil and small ruminants. In its 4th phase, the projects focus not only on improved natural resource management and market integration but also on creating (job) opportunities for youth and women in the region.

In 2022, the organisation of a fair showcased the products and economic potential of the Ferlo to a wider public. This fair was organised by HEKS/EPER's partner organisation (CERFLA) in cooperation with the city council of Linguère. This event allowed the actors of the different local sectors to build new commercial contacts and sell their products more easily.

Georgia – Participatory Budgeting Process Including Population in Political Decision Processes

The EU-funded civil society development project in Georgia aims to foster full participation of people in civic, economic, and political life – including minorities and marginalised in decision-making. The project trains young civil society activists, links members of civil society with local authorities to shape jointly municipal polity, fostering citizen participation, hosts a CSO platform uniting them in advocacy efforts, supports small enterprises in their business evolution, and sensitises local journalists for issues of participation on municipal level.

The project significantly impacted initiation and implementation of a **participatory budgeting programme**, including developing models and legal frameworks and forming and training the participatory budgeting council. Members were enabled to set priorities, launch information campaigns, to submit successful applications considering topics relevant to civil society. As a direct result, the municipalities of Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki allocated 20,000 Georgian Lari and 30,000 GEL for the participatory budget programme in 2023–2024. Inspired by their example, the town of Akhaltsikhe allocated 100,000 GEL for 2023–2024. And, the local self-government of Dmanisi municipality decided to launch the participatory budgeting in 2024.



The community in Ninotsminda, Georgia, opted in the frame of the participatory budgeting programme that the municipality constructs a water station for cattle.

In these participatory budgeting programmes in total, 13 initiatives were submitted: 5 in Akhaltsikhe, and 4 each in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda. All five initiatives from Akhaltsikhe, plus 2 from Akhalkalaki, and all 4 from Ninotsminda passed the verification process. Community representatives selected a proposal in each municipality, resulting in the decision to build a cattle watering station in Ninotsminda and an electronic billboard in Akhalkalaki for public broadcasting of sports games, festivals, and other community events. Voting and selection of the initiative in Akhaltsikhe will be finalised in the 2024 year.

Syria – Educational and Social Inclusion and Nexus to Humanitarian Aid

In 2023, HEKS/EPER continued supporting Christian and Muslim students from disadvantaged families in church-run schools in Syria. The **scholarship project** supported 830 students with partial or full coverage of their tuition fees. The project maintains a balanced support towards the students' different religious backgrounds, with 60% being Muslim and 40% Christian. The aim is to make the schools spaces where Christians and Muslims have positive experiences in studying and living together, including those students who could otherwise not afford education.

In addition, HEKS continued to support the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches (FMEEC) in its **Sunday School project** for children in Syria. Over 3'700 children participated in the weekly programme over 2023, supported by 318 church volunteers. The Sunday School is carried out by 17 local churches in the country and offers weekly activities for children, plus additional activities such as summer festivals, celebrations and gatherings. The activities are open to all children from the local communities, including protestant children, other Christian denominations, as well as children from other religious communities like Muslim or Druze. In addition, several children from internally displaced families, as well as children with disabilities, were included in the project in 2023. FMEEC provides overall project coordination across the different locations and supports the volunteers with different trainings, e.g. on self-care, psychosocial support, pedagogy, etc.



Scholarship project – Students of different religious backgrounds experience a high-quality education.

Finally, the Armenian Evangelical Church in Syria jointly developed a new humanitarian project component. 300 vulnerable Christian and Muslim families in Aleppo and Kassab received cash assistance. The church-operated health clinic in Aleppo provided free health services and medication to over 2,520 disadvantaged people from the surrounding communities.

Achievements & Perspectives

Achievements in the Past Years

During the last decades, HEKS/EPER supported and facilitated processes towards enhancing the inclusion and fulfilment of rights of discriminated and excluded minority groups.

In **Eastern Europe**, Romania, Serbia, Kosovo, Hungary, Slovakia and Transcarpathian Ukraine, HEKS/EPER focuses on the social inclusion of Roma people, migrant people and refugees, home care services for elderly people, people with disabilities and victims of domestic violence are supported as well.

In **Asia**, HEKS/EPER supports vulnerable peasants who are discriminated against and excluded by minority groups like Dalits and Adibashi. In the last years, it has successfully contributed to better access to services, land, economic opportunities, participation in advocacy, improved relationships with mainstream society, and a better status of these minorities (see promising practice above).

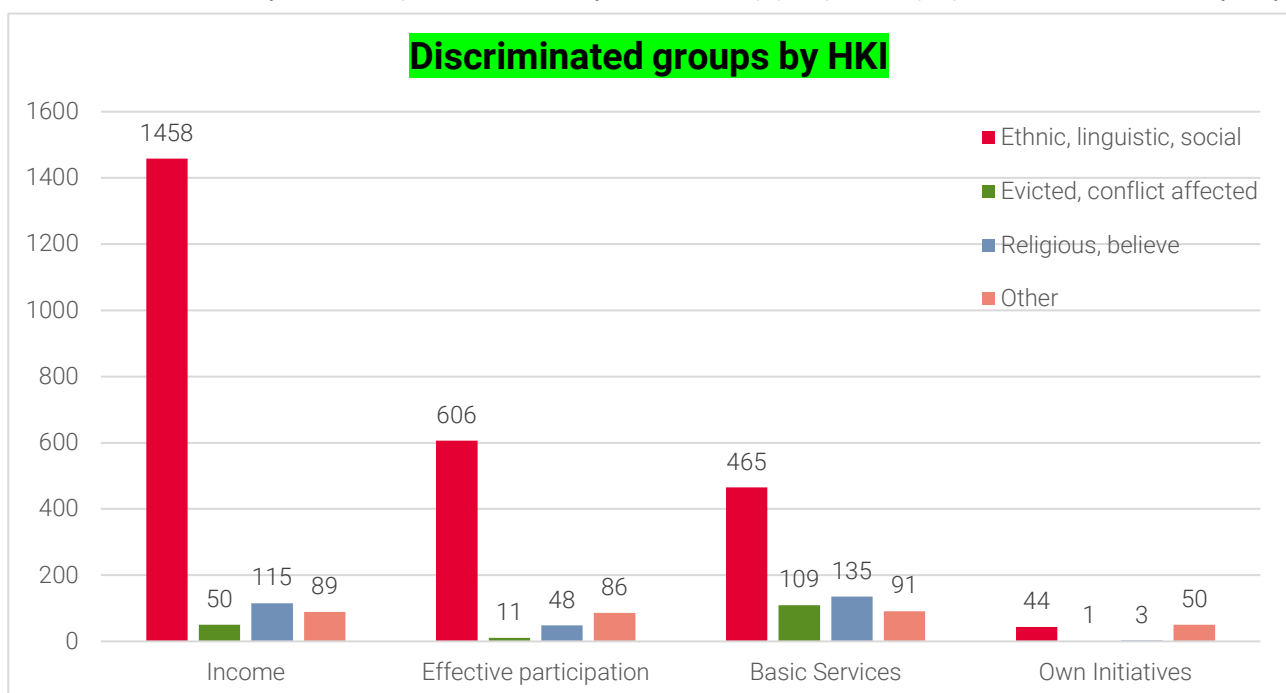
In **Africa** and **Latin America**, HEKS/EPER contributes to overcoming discrimination and fights for equal rights for landless, disenfranchised, indigenous, pastoralists, excluded, oppressed, displaced, and conflict-affected people and communities. Since women or young people are often excluded and left behind, HEKS/EPER contributes to fulfilling women's rights and includes women and youth in all its engagements.

Discriminated groups 2023

HKI data are disaggregated by different characteristics, amongst them the self-declared affiliation to a discriminated group. Analysed indicators describing actions towards non-discrimination – such as HKI income, HKI participation, HKI Basic Services or own initiatives, etc. – reveal that HEKS/EPER projects address mostly discriminated individuals or groups, and about 50% of people experiencing progress considering income, participation or access to basic services belong to discriminated groups.

The graph below shows that the main reasons for exclusion are rooted in ethnic, linguistic or social differences; conflict or religion plays a minor role in considering discrimination within HEKS/EPER projects.

However, capturing discrimination can be risky and reinforce exclusion and discrimination. Therefore, awareness, conflict sensitivity, and data protection are key to measuring group-belonging in a non-discriminatory way.



The data 2023 reflect how often 'belonging to a discriminated group' has been selected by project participants (self-perceived). One person may belong to several discriminated groups. Mostly excluded are people belonging to an ethnic, linguistic and social group being discriminated.

Achievements 2023 – Data & Analysis

To describe the progress of inclusion, HEKS/EPER disaggregates several indicators about group belonging, e.g., 'access to basic services', 'own initiative taken for equality and non-violence' and 'effective participation'. The disaggregation by group belonging is adapted to the country context with different ethnic/linguistic/social groups, evicted/conflict-affected, religious, and other discriminated groups. Economic inclusion is another aspect – treated in the specific factsheet 'Inclusive Markets Systems', using the HKI 'Income' amongst others. In Eastern Europe, HEKS/EPER does not only work with its development cooperation approach but also with church organisations that focus on the social inclusion of the marginalised.

Globally, HEKS/EPER enabled access to **basic services** for 611'445 people (2022: 63'269), 518'774 of them in Venezuela, getting access to water and sanitation. 69% are girls or women, and 91% of all belonging to discriminated groups. In Bangladesh, Niger, DR Congo, Uganda, Haiti, Venezuela, Romania, Serbia, and Kosovo, 49'422 people benefited from individual and 562'023 group services in 2023. The type of services in Bangladesh, Niger, DRC, and Haiti were mainly community services and social schemes aiming at improving livelihood or infrastructure such as roads.

In **Eastern Europe**, in Kosovo, Serbia and Romania, HEKS/EPER addressed with DC projects 11'362 people directly, and 28'000 indirectly with supportive policies to overcome discrimination - out of them, about 7771 people got access to basic services such as health services, education, public job and social schemes or infrastructure such as water, electricity, etc. – 3672 people received individual services and 4099 did profit from group services.

HKI Effective Participation

In 11 projects in 7 countries, 85.6% of the community members *actively participated in decision-making bodies suggesting and advocating ideas*.

Participation: Graph A shows that **85.6%** (2022: 82.2%) of the community members **participate actively**. **55.3 %** (2022: 51%) **suggest ideas**, and **30.3%** (2022: 31.2%) even **advocate** for implementing their ideas. 70% of these members active in local organisations are women.

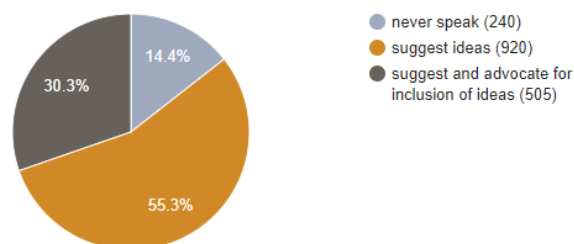
Influence: Community members reported moderate (41,6%) or high (23,7%) influence in community bodies in which they participated. 34.7% (2022: 36.8%) indicate that they have no or a rather low influence.

Yet, analysing the data of the 34.7 % of people on reasons for 'no influence' in-depth (Graph B), HEKS/EPER notices that discriminated groups supported by HEKS/EPER projects feel comfortable speaking up.

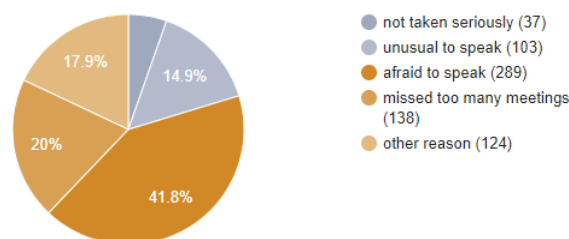
- Of people saying for them it is '*unusual to speak*', 19% belong to discriminated groups.
- Of people who are '*afraid to speak*' at meetings, 29% are discriminated against.
- And, of those who '*missed too many meetings*', 26% are discriminated community members.

Almost 46,8% of individuals participating in relevant and truly relevant organisations for communal decision-making indicate their affiliation to discriminated groups. Mainly, they are discriminated against by ethnic, indigenous, linguistic, occupational, social or socio-economic factors. Among them are representatives of vulnerable groups such as Dalit, Pahan, and Urao in Bangladesh, indigenous people in Cambodia, and economically deprived farmers in Haiti.

Out of 1603 (2022: 3028) community members participating in different organisations, 48% or 775 persons (2022: 54,7% or 1655 persons) report participating in an organisation relevant to overarching or specific resource and topic communal decision-making. At the same time, 46% or 738 persons (2022: 36% or 1089 persons) engage in advocacy or interest groups and 6% or 90 persons (2022: 9% or 284 persons) in voluntary work or self-



Graph A: How did, in 2023, project participants speak-out in their communities in processes of decision-making.



Graph B: Being afraid to speak or missing meeting are the two most important reasons of having 'no influence'.

help groups (284). Women constitute 70% (2022: 60%) of these community members active in local organisations.

Possibly due to COVID-19, the affirmative data on influence decreased from 70% in 2020 to 55% in 2021, as people had less access to meetings or decision-making was no longer in the hands of local bodies and authorities. With the data now rising again to 65.3% in 2023, there is a positive trend in these 11 HEKS/EPER projects.

Training skills and sharing knowledge

HEKS/EPER facilitated in 2023 overall 793 training workshops and learning/sensitisation events in 11 countries. **40'322 people** participated in 500 learning events addressing the **human-rights-based approach, conflict sensitivity, and conflict transformation**.

196 initiatives addressed **gender equality** topics, with 26,336 participants. Such training or events of mutual exchange are key to fostering people's abilities to speak up, claim rights, or enter a (policy) dialogue with duty-bearers. They have scale-up effects as people share their learnings and experiences and motivate others to engage for their own needs and rights. Such training and learning initiatives actively enable individuals and communities to overcome discrimination.

HKI Own Initiatives

This HKI demonstrates commitment and behavioural change and is thus an indicator of a project's possible sustainability, strengthening communities to act on their own rights. Data was gathered from 4 projects in 3 countries (Uganda, South Sudan and Congo) only. In the frame of these four projects, 250 activities have been implemented and traced 68% were collective initiatives of groups. 46% were taken up independently (43% in 2022), while 51% were facilitated by HEKS/EPER (40.4% in 2022). This shows how important the engagement of HEKS/EPER and other civic organisations is – especially in pandemics or crises – to motivate, strengthen and support initiative persons in their activities. Yet also, ways to enable independent acting must be found.

Diapaxis

HEKS/EPER's country staff is committed to addressing key drivers of conflict with diapaxis. One of the examples of applying the diapaxis approach is a joint action in the rural commune of Droum, department of Mirriah, Niger, presented by partner ZAMTAPO. The area is affected by severe resource conflicts between nomadic pastoralists and settled farmers, as well as residents, internally displaced people and refugees from neighbouring Nigeria and Chad. The diapaxis and the joint management of the village grazing area improve social cohesion between communities and distinct groups. This action involves about 400 most vulnerable people (women heads of households, widows and men who have little or no income).

Inclusion through Church Cooperation activities

In the frame of **Church Cooperation** (CC – not funded by SDC), HEKS/EPER enabled with **2.06 M CHF** social work of Reformed Churches in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, reaching out to almost **47'232 people** through **21 projects in 8 countries**; another **522'048** were reached indirectly. Most activities are linked to the inclusion of marginalised people, often elderly, or then children and young people.

In **Eastern Europe**, HEKS/EPER also works on social inclusion of marginalised groups through church cooperation focusing on i) homecare for the elderly and sick/handicapped in rural Romania, Ukraine and Serbia; ii) Roma inclusion in Hungary, Slovakia (240 people); iii) on the inclusion of migrants and refugees in the Czech Republic, in Hungary, Slovakia and Serbia; iv) humanitarian support in Ukraine, Romania and Hungary to host and support Ukrainian refugees. In Romania, 34'000 people participated in CC inclusion projects, and 21'000 of the elderly or sick benefitted from homecare services.

In the **Middle East**, Church Cooperation's social inclusion activities reached 7,500 people, including Syrian refugees in Lebanon or Syria, enabling almost 6,500 Muslim and Christian children and youth to access scholarships for higher education or an afterschool education programme. The earthquake that hit Turkey and Northern Syria on February 6, 2023, further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Northern Syria. Together with the church partners, HEKS/EPER is supporting those most affected.



Other HEKS/EPER publications related to 'inclusion and non-discrimination.'

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

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 the inclusion of 133'000 people. HEKS/EPER Global Cooperation (GC) assisted 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 net costs spent for the global programme.

GC spent 28.09 M CHF (net costs) on Development Cooperation, directly ameliorating the lives of 3.688.478 people. It promoted politics and practices enabling sustainable systems change and implemented 98 development projects, focusing on right/access to land and resources, fostering sustainable agricultural production, climate mitigation and adaptation, peaceful societies, and socio-economic inclusion. 7.774.356 people benefited indirectly, e.g., through successful advocacy for introducing or securing rights and supportive 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 the social and humanitarian work of Reformed Churches and organisations in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, reaching 47'232 people directly and another 522'048 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 5.26 M CHF on advocacy and policy work, coordinated through 25 projects. GC maintains links to partners, alliances, and networks in Switzerland and worldwide to ensure outreach.

Global Cooperation strives 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, environment-, 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, reports published on GC's Governance Website: https://en.heks.ch/Institutional_Governance

Published by HEKS/EPER thematic advisory and MEAL units, May 2024, Zürich (Switzerland)



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