



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Big changes start small.



# EDITORIAL

How do helpers feel when their implements are knocked out of their hands? How do helpers feel when the tools they need go missing? No doubt powerless and helpless at first. But thanks mainly to the creativeness and innovative

strength of our entire staff, things did not stop there during the Covid-19 pandemic last year. In the spring of 2020, the lockdown changed our lives in a few short weeks. Never before had we witnessed the paralysis of social and economic life on such a scale. Old certainties were overturned, things we took for granted were replaced by uncertainty and all plans were rendered pointless.

At first, the spring restrictions made it difficult to continue many of our programmes and projects: language courses as well as coaching and counselling sessions had to be moved online; the uptake of translation services dwindled and group meetings were no longer possible. The crisis also severely impacted work in our programme countries. Travel options were drastically curtailed and projects had to be suspended in many countries.



The HEKS/EPER management and staff responded rapidly to the crisis with great dedication and flexibility. At home and abroad, Covid-19 emergency aid projects were mounted and existing programmes adapted to the pandemic situation.

« Solidarity was in high demand in 2020. It took the form of help within the family, among friends, in the neighbourhood, as well as from public and private organisations. »

People in precarious circumstances have been hit especially hard by the crisis. These included the elderly, who could no longer leave their homes, poor people, who soon ran out of food, and refugees, who became disoriented in the new situation. Poverty-stricken people in programme countries often suffered a double blow. In addition to the Corona virus, East Africa fell prey to a massive locust infestation. HEKS/EPER responded to the global emergency with prevention, sanitation and training programmes, food aid, telephone helplines and virtual counselling options.

Solidarity was in high demand in 2020. It took the form of help within the family, among friends, in the neighbourhood, as well as from public and private organisations. And this solidarity materialised on a large scale. The support of the general public too was just as crucial. Thanks to our donors and various financial backers, we were able to press ahead with our mission in this year of crisis and lend a helping hand to people in need at home and abroad. For this we are most grateful.

**Walter Schmid**

President of the HEKS/EPER Board of Trustees

## 2020 IN A NUTSHELL



### PAGES 4 TO 9 OUR TOPICS ABROAD: DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION, CHURCH COOPERATION AND HUMANITARIAN AID

**3,63 million** people in total benefited from HEKS/EPER projects abroad.

**2 million** people benefited from various COVID prevention and support measures.

**160 000** people were assisted by HEKS/EPER in claiming their rights.

### PAGES 12 TO 17 OUR TOPICS IN SWITZERLAND: INCLUSION AND ADVOCACY

**21 473** people benefited from specific measures under 17 corona emergency aid projects.

**63 155** people were assisted by HEKS/EPER in claiming their rights and through integration measures.

**9813** hours of volunteer work were done by 241 persons in HEKS/EPER activities in Switzerland.



### PAGES 20 AND 21 INTERVIEW WITH PETER MERZ, DIRECTOR OF HEKS/EPER: REVIEW AND OUTLOOK 2021

**61,4 million** francs went to projects at home and abroad.

**332** persons were permanently employed by HEKS/EPER in 2020.

**16,1%** represented the share of administrative costs, including fundraising (average as per ZEWO: 21%).

### PAGES 22 TO 25 ORGANIZATION, EFFECTIVE ACTION, RESPONSIBILITY, TRANSPARENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY

**41** of its 50 transparency goals were fully met by HEKS/EPER in 2020, the rest in part.

**7** guidelines make up the manifesto co-sponsored by HEKS/EPER for responsible NGO communications.

**1** new digital whistleblowing tool was introduced for use at home and abroad.



### PAGES 26 AND 27 NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL REPORT, BALANCE SHEET AND OPERATING ACCOUNTS 2020

**78,8 million** francs in total revenue were booked by HEKS/EPER.

**25,2 million** francs came from donations.

**14,4%** of revenue comprises contributions from church circles.



## HEKS/EPER MAKING A DIFFERENCE ABROAD

In 2020 HEKS/EPER responded to the worldwide corona pandemic and its economic impacts through existing or adapted humanitarian aid, development cooperation and church cooperation projects. Yet for many project participants, Covid-19 was just one crisis among many.

In spring 2020 HEKS/EPER country offices and partner organisations reacted promptly and professionally to the continuing global spread of the coronavirus. The first step was to disseminate information on the virus and distribute personal protective equipment as well as disinfectant in project regions. HEKS/EPER also redoubled its efforts to provide clean water and better sanitary facilities in many countries. The second step was designed to cushion the direct and severe economic impacts of the pandemic. Literally overnight, many people found themselves facing existential danger, being no longer able to sell their products or pursue their occupation, and with no financial reserves at all. Emergency relief was channelled through existing project structures to supply these people with the essentials. The challenge now is successfully reverting to long-term cooperation that will enable people once again to fend for themselves.

### **Just one crisis among many**

For many in the global South, however, the pandemic was and still is just one crisis among many. Even before Covid-19, numerous lives had already been at risk in 2020 from other dangers such as climate change and its impacts, hunger and poverty or violent conflicts. Wherever possible, HEKS/EPER therefore continued its regular project work abroad. In North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, HEKS/EPER mounted a large-scale humanitarian aid programme to assist people displaced internally by armed strife. Besides, HEKS/EPER expanded its pro-

ject activities to Venezuela, where basic supply systems had been in partial collapse even before Covid-19, owing to the political crisis, hyperinflation and international embargoes.

### **Traditional communities against climate change**

Through its support of traditional communities, HEKS/EPER also did its part in highlighting certain key issues. In March 2020, for example, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) declared the traditional farming system of the flower gatherers in Brazil's savannah region, the Cerrado, as a globally important agricultural heritage system. That was a vital step towards its conservation. HEKS/EPER believes that thanks to their sustainable way of life and their traditional knowledge, indigenous and local communities can make a major contribution to conserving worldwide biodiversity and healthy ecosystems – both of which are critical to overcoming the global climate and environmental crisis.

**More information on project work in individual countries:**  
[en.heks.ch/worldwide](https://en.heks.ch/worldwide)

# DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

In addition to Covid-19, peasant families in developing countries had to cope with various other challenges like the impacts of climate change or the threat to their living space from agribusiness. HEKS/EPER supported rural communities in securing access to land and water, building up sustainable agriculture and finding new markets.

62 800

people boosted their incomes in 2020 thanks to HEKS/EPER help.

## BRAZIL: PEASANT FARMERS DEFEND THEIR RIGHT TO WATER

The Rio Pardo is a lifeline and source of livelihood for thousands of families in Minas Gerais and Bahia. The same is true of traditional Quilombola communities living from land cultivation, livestock rearing and gathering along the river.

Yet the irrigation of massive coffee, eucalyptus and sugarcane plantations is having a disastrous impact on the river's water level and overall water management in the region. HEKS/EPER therefore supports the people living along the Rio Pardo in actively claiming their right to water.

In 2020 this project benefited some 3000 people, peasant families for the most part. In addition to legal advice and training courses, two regional committees were set up as means of getting through to the local authorities and organising political actions to promote sustainable water use. HEKS/EPER also supported the creation of a civil society water observatory. The scientific data it gathers on water resource changes are of key importance to political negotiations. Traditional communities also received support for their agro-ecological farming practices and in the marketing of their products.



## ETHIOPIA: THE BORANA PEOPLE AS CUSTODIANS OF HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS

Lengthy dry spells and droughts have always been part of daily life for the cattle-rearing Borana people in Ethiopia's semi-arid lowlands. Over the centuries they have developed a community-based system of production that makes sustainable use of limited pastureland and water resources, protects biodiversity and copes very well with climatic variation. Yet this system is being increasingly destabilised by the advancing climate change.

The Borana witnessed further threats to their existence in 2020 from an infestation of desert locusts and a cattle disease. HEKS/EPER therefore assisted some 1000 families in improving their soil and water management, in feeding their animals and in their struggle to cope with ongoing erosion. Furthermore, HEKS/EPER actively sought long-overdue government recognition of land use rights for the Borana people. The fact is that by virtue of their sustainable lifestyle and traditional knowledge, these traditional communities are custodians of healthy ecosystems, the conservation of which is essential to the survival of life on our planet.



# CHURCH COOPERATION

38 730

people benefitted from church co-operation projects in Eastern Europe and the Middle East in 2020.

HEKS/EPER church cooperation in 2020 entailed support for partner churches in Eastern Europe and the Middle East in playing an active and responsible role in their societies, particularly to help the most vulnerable and disadvantaged such as the elderly, people with impairments or Roma minorities.



## HUNGARY: EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG ROMA

In many countries of Eastern Europe the Roma are among the minorities facing the worst discrimination. Many experience unemployment, poverty and hopelessness. Relations between Roma communities and the majority population are often very tense. In Hungary, HEKS/EPER is currently supporting 15 Reformed Church parishes that are working to promote peaceful coexistence and consciously reaching out to the Roma community, for example by offering educational courses as well as cultural and spiritual programmes for disadvantaged families, children and young people. In parallel, church communities also sensitise their members to the concerns of the Roma, whom they include in activities designed to foster mutual understanding and esteem.

HEKS/EPER is working with 10 Reformed primary schools to make them more inclusive and to better incorporate Roma as well as other marginal groups into mainstream classes. Roma pupils can also take part in a special programme of extra tuition to improve their educational level and long term professional prospects. This programme benefitted some 750 young Roma in 2020.



## ROMANIA: HOME CARE SERVICE IN TRANSYLVANIA

For years now Romania's young people have been abandoning the countryside in droves for the cities or for Western European countries. Those left behind in the villages are mostly the elderly without the support of family members, drawing small pensions, and having to make do with a dilapidated healthcare system. Moreover, many are care-dependent and socially isolated. For the past 20 years HEKS/EPER has therefore been assisting its church-run partner organisation «Diakonia» in building or expanding home care services in Transylvania.

In 2020, some 15 000 sick and elderly people in about 200 villages benefitted from this professional outpatient social and health service run by the Reformed Church. In the light of the corona pandemic, the roughly 120 carers were supplied this spring with additional protective materials such as gloves, masks and disinfectant. Thanks to a rapidly implemented protection strategy, the «Diakonia» foundation was able to maintain its programmes and thereby make a vital contribution to relieving the already overburdened government system. For ailing and isolated people, the home-care workers have been and still are a key source of psychological comfort during this period.

# HUMANITARIAN AID

Besides Covid-19, other crises also helped shape HEKS/EPER's emergency aid programmes. Early in the year East Africa witnessed its worst locust infestation in decades, Beirut was rocked by a disastrous explosion in the summer, and just before year's end, hurricanes wreaked havoc in Honduras – to mention just three other disasters after which HEKS/EPER stepped in with emergency relief in 2020.

11 countries

worldwide benefited from HEKS/EPER humanitarian aid projects in 2020.



## LEBANON: EMERGENCY AID AFTER EXPLOSION AT THE PORT OF BEIRUT

The Lebanese State is verging on collapse. The middle classes were rapidly impoverished in 2020 by an economic crisis amplified by Covid-19. Besides, on 4 August 2020 the city of over a million inhabitants was rocked by a catastrophic explosion in the port of Beirut, caused by improperly stored ammonium nitrate. Some 300 000 people had to abandon their destroyed homes and workplaces.

In late August, long-standing HEKS/EPER partner organisation «Najdeh» already began emergency assistance to some 7000 people from Beirut's poorest districts. The shockwave had blown out windows and doors, destroyed homes, leaving behind a people wounded both physically and psychologically. HEKS/EPER provided 700 dollars in direct payments to the most vulnerable, disbursed in three instalments over four months. Recipients included the elderly and sick as well as single mothers and their children. Monitoring has shown that this financial aid was spent mainly on food, healthcare and home refurbishments. Some 95 per cent of recipients were highly satisfied with the form and effect of this assistance.



## BANGLADESH: EMERGENCY AID FOR MARGINALISED MINORITIES

The HEKS/EPER Bangladesh office responded rapidly to the Covid-19 crisis in the spring of 2020: existing partners and development project structures could be used for rapid and effective preventive action and for delivering emergency aid to the poorest. HEKS/EPER turned to flyers, posters and local television channels to inform people about the virus and how to protect against it, and also distributed soap, disinfectant and washing utensils. The pandemic meant dire emergency for many already living on the breadline, notably marginalised people such as Dalits and Adivasis, as well as sex workers.

HEKS/EPER therefore distributed urgently needed food packages to some 50 000 households. Meanwhile, another SDC-funded project – also for the benefit of minorities subject to discrimination – focused on food security, better sanitation practices and, as of 2021, will primarily help marginalised communities rebuild their livelihoods. Many of them had to sell all their possessions during the country-wide lockdown. Besides emergency aid, other forms of support are now expected to give them the wherewithal to earn a living again over the long term.

# HEKS/EPER MAKES A DIFFERENCE GLOBALLY

## PROJECT COUNTRIES 2020

### Europe

- Armenia
- Czech Republic
- Georgia
- Hungary
- Italy
- Kosovo
- Moldova
- Romania
- Serbia
- Slovakia
- Ukraine

### Africa

- DR of the Congo
- Ethiopia
- Niger
- Senegal
- South Sudan
- Uganda
- Zimbabwe

### Asia

- Bangladesh
- Cambodia
- India
- Indonesia
- Iraq
- Palestine/Israel
- Lebanon
- Myanmar
- Syria

### Latin America

- Brazil
- Colombia
- Haiti
- Honduras
- Venezuela
- Development Cooperation
- Church Cooperation
- Humanitarian Aid

**Mac Donald Germeil, Haiti:** «In late March HEKS/EPER contacted my wife and me in their search for local sewing studios to produce protective masks. We responded immediately, as protective masks are very important at present. The demand for masks has skyrocketed since news broke of the first Covid-19 cases in the country. Masks are almost impossible to find here in Jérémie. We all therefore truly appreciate this initiative to produce them locally.»

**Project 830.393 Precautions and hygiene measures to contain the coronavirus**



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**Antonia Echenique, Venezuela:** «I am grateful for the warm meals that we receive here. I have three children, the youngest is three years old. Their father has migrated to Chile. I myself work in the informal sector and my income has practically vanished because of Covid-19. I am now living on roughly four dollars a month.»

**Projet 880.316 Warm meals and toiletries for mothers with young children**



**Singa Ndayisama, DR of the Congo:** «I participated in the cash-for-work programme, doing road maintenance work. I was paid 25 dollars. I will now go to the market and buy clothes for the family with some of it. From what's left I will also buy a chicken which I will give to my wife to rear at home.»

**Project 788.385 Emergency aid for families affected by conflict in remote areas**





**Klara Bosbici, Romania:** «I suffered severe burns all over my body in an accident at home. I was then discharged much too early from hospital because of Covid-19. The «Diakonia» home-care team looked after me every day since then. The scars are still there, of course, but I've got my vitality back. The carers are now like grandchildren to me.»

**Project 942.382 Home care service in Transylvania**



1

**Agantha Murm, Bangladesh:** «The food aid during the nationwide lockdown was a big help for us. We received no government support at all during this time, although aid had been pledged for us. We are suffering badly in this situation. My family is very poor. We have three children and my husband is the only breadwinner in the family.»

**Project 610.438 Dalits and Adivasis protect themselves from the corona pandemic**



2

**Sothearith Sok, Cambodia:**

«I have learned a lot through the «DakDam» programme for young entrepreneurs, above all how to better market my ideas. I am convinced that the young people can bring forward innovative ideas and new leadership qualities and so make a major contribution to alleviating poverty in our country.»

**Project 652.329 Innovative ideas for agriculture in Cambodia**



3

**Fetiya Ahmed, Ethiopia**

«I am very happy about the new water system. Before we got it, the children often had diarrhoea, now they are much healthier. The new situation benefits my daughter and me especially, as we were the ones who had to fetch water and my daughter often missed school as a result. My neighbours and I now have time to do other work, which allows us to earn some extra income. That benefits the whole family.»

**Project 706.401 Drinking water and latrines for villages and schools**



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**Ahmed Othman, Lebanon:**

«The house we live in is right next to the harbour, which was the area hardest hit by the explosion. It was built just 10 years ago, but the blast was so powerful it destroyed everything – the gypsum walls, the windows. Many organisations have come by, many only asked questions and never came back. You are the only ones who have helped us. The 200 dollars we are now receiving over two months are a big help to us.»

**Project 660.339 Emergency and reconstruction aid after the Beirut explosion**



4



A helper in corona protective gear escorts an elderly woman through a Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh. Hundreds of thousands of people live there in overcrowded and very confined spaces. An outbreak of the virus in such a camp would be catastrophic.  
Photo: Faysal Ahmad





# HEKS/EPER MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN SWITZERLAND

The corona pandemic significantly influenced the work of HEKS/EPER in Switzerland in 2020. HEKS/EPER stood by socially disadvantaged people in this extraordinary year by providing short-term emergency aid and flexibly adapting its projects.

As a charitable organisation, HEKS/EPER's mission is to be there for people in need, precisely during a societal crisis such as the current corona pandemic. HEKS/EPER continued working flat out when daily life abruptly changed for many people across Switzerland in the spring of 2020. Support schemes were created rapidly and simply to be able to assist those at greatest disadvantage in Switzerland.

## **Immediate relief for migrants and sans papiers**

The corona crisis hit sans papiers (undocumented people) and those with uncertain residence status particularly hard. Many of them are normally employed in private households, but lost their jobs as a result of the lockdown and had no access to government aid. Deprived of income, they could neither pay their rent nor feed their family. Based in the Canton of Geneva, the HEKS/EPER project «Permanences Volantes» therefore expanded its capacities. HEKS/EPER staff took hundreds of calls every day from people in despair, informed them about their rights as workers and arranged food coupons for them. At an early stage in the pandemic HEKS/EPER became aware through its projects that owing to language barriers, many migrants were not being sufficiently informed about protective measures or had no idea where to turn for help with financial, psychological or family problems. HEKS/EPER therefore installed a temporary helpline in 10 languages. Callers received information as well as initial psycho-social support and were referred to other specialised services whenever this was appropriate.

## **Maintaining schemes for the socially disadvantaged**

Wherever possible, HEKS/EPER continued its projects in an adapted form so that despite the constraints on public life, socially disadvantaged people could maintain social contacts and still access education, counselling and legal support. Language and conversation courses therefore continued via digital channels and later in small groups, legal advice sessions in asylum matters or accompaniment in job integration interviews continued by phone or with strict adherence to protection measures.

## **Solidarity more crucial than ever**

The longer the corona pandemic lasts, the more apparent its long-term economic and social consequences become. People living in poverty are at risk of further isolation and finding themselves on the margins of society. In the coming years HEKS/EPER will therefore focus its work in Switzerland more strongly on counteracting the negative impacts of the pandemic through innovative and targeted schemes.

**More information on the project work of  
HEKS/EPER Regional Offices:  
[en.heks.ch/switzerland](https://en.heks.ch/switzerland)**

# INCLUSION

Keeping in touch despite social distancing was the watchword for the 44 HEKS/EPER integration projects in 2020. Many already disadvantaged or lonely people suffered badly from social isolation as a result of the pandemic. HEKS/EPER flexibly adapted its offerings and maintained them wherever possible so as help project participants through this challenging time.

1034

persons were helped by HEKS/EPER to enter the job market in 2020.

## **INTERCULTURAL INTERPRETING SERVICE HEKS / EPER LINGUADUKT, NORTH-WESTERN SWITZERLAND**

Migrants in Switzerland who do not yet fully master the local language are dependent on interpreting services for conversations with authorities, at hospitals or at school. «HEKS/EPER Linguadukt» bridges this language gap in North-Western Switzerland and in two federal asylum centres. With a pool of over 350 staffers, HEKS/EPER provides interpreting services in more than 60 languages and dialects. Intermediation by interpreters is not limited to language alone. Social and cultural differences are also factored in.

The 2020 corona lockdown led to a sharp drop in the number of mandates. «HEKS/EPER Linguadukt» took the opportunity to digitise its booking process and to introduce telephone interpreting. The number of mandates began increasing again as of the summer, as many postponed interviews and assessments were then being carried out. Particularly challenging interviews that required the physical presence of an interpreter were conducted with strict adherence to protective measures. Despite the more difficult circumstances, «HEKS/EPER Linguadukt» interpreters put in 33 927 hours of work in 2020, thereby ensuring good understanding between speakers of foreign languages and experts.

## **SOCIAL INCLUSION FOR THE LONG-TERM JOBLESS HEKS / EPER VISITS AARGAU / SOLOTHURN**

«HEKS/EPER Visits» is intended mainly for people dependent on social assistance and with virtually no further prospects on the mainstream job market. The project organises placements in non-profit organisations tailored to suit the individual needs and capabilities of participants. Regular private placements are a chance for participants to forge social contacts, to have occupation, as well as a structured week.

The programme has been badly affected by corona. In the spring, many participating organisations suspended their operations or opted for working from home. Consequently, most of the «Visits» placements could no longer take place and «Visits» group meetings had to be suspended. For many participants, often already socially isolated, this meant losing their most important link with the outside world. The staff of «HEKS/EPER Visits» broke this isolation during the lockdown by making weekly telephone calls in which they provided information about current corona measures. As of June, placements and meetings in small groups could resume, with appropriate protection measures. There were altogether 59 programme participants in 2020.



## FAIR JOB CONDITIONS FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS CHÈQUES EMPLOI, VAUD

For the past 16 years the «Chèques-emploi» programme has championed the rights of cleaning and other household staff in the Canton of Vaud. This commitment assumed even greater meaning during the pandemic, as many employers dispensed with the services of their employees owing to the lockdown and partial paralysis of the economy, even though such services were not prohibited. Having lost their income from one day to



the next, many of these people suddenly found themselves in an existential crisis, as they were receiving no government assistance.

Besides providing personal counselling for 2200 employers and 400 employees during the year and running 11 courses on legal and health matters for employees, «Chèques-emploi» conducted a series of campaigns to remind employers of their legal obligation to pay their workers. Mounted jointly with the «UNIA» trade union, the «#JeContinueAPayer» campaign led many employers to reverse their decision to stop paying their workers during the lockdown. The second campaign entitled «Propre? En ordre!», launched in 2020 in collaboration with «Coordination suisse des Chèques-emploi au niveau romand», was designed to regularise the employment status of unregistered household workers. There are some 400 000 people employed in private households in Switzerland, many of whom are not registered and therefore have no entitlement to employee protections. Both campaigns generated considerable media coverage and helped to draw attention to the precarious working conditions in this sector of the economy.

## SUPPORT FOR OLDER MIGRANTS ALTUM – AGE AND MIGRATION ZÜRICH

Fear of the virus, the sudden interruption of social interaction with friends, daily routines that are largely devoid of any variety – the corona crisis is taking a heavy toll on older people in particular. Things have proved even more challenging for older migrants in Switzerland. Because of language barriers, many of them lacked guidance on the current measures being brought in by the government, as well as access to public support programmes.



Many suffered badly from social isolation and experienced anxiety, helplessness and depression.

Despite having to cancel all physical information events and group meetings for migrants 55 years and over in the spring of 2020, «HEKS/EPER AltuM» showed great dedication and flexibility in ensuring that participants were still able to access vital information and health-related support. WhatsApp groups were quickly set up so as to keep in touch with participants and offer them up-to-date information in their mother tongue. Yoga, gymnastic, dance and computer course leaders sent out «Home exercises» and interactive programmes to foster social interaction, and the uptake was good. Those who did not master digital means of communication were contacted regularly by phone. Older migrants in the Canton of Zürich could be assisted in this way during the corona crisis.

The «HEKS/EPER AltuM Tandem» pilot project could still proceed successfully, albeit under more difficult circumstances. The project targets older refugees living in isolation, who are aided individually by a volunteer in day-to-day matters and in becoming integrated. Eleven «tandems» were formed in 2020 and are still regularly in touch today.

# ADVOCACY

HEKS/EPER provides legal advice and support for socially disadvantaged persons such as asylum seekers and refugees, sans papiers (undocumented persons), people on low incomes, as well as people affected by discrimination. They are all at great risk of seeing their rights violated or of becoming socially excluded.

## 56%

of the applications submitted by legal advice offices for asylum seekers were approved in 2020.



### ADVICE CENTRE AGAINST RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION, EASTERN SWITZERLAND

The international «#BlackLivesMatter» movement of 2020 brought the issue of racism in Switzerland to public attention. Many of those concerned spoke out during the public debate and reported racist incidents and experiences of discrimination. Yet again, this showed that racism and discrimination in house-hunting, in dealings with authorities, at school, at work and in private life are present in the daily lives of people with a different origin, skin colour, religion or lifestyle, and are a threat to their existence.

Perhaps having gained new awareness from these developments, substantially more individuals and institutions contacted the HEKS/EPER Advice Centre against Racism and Discrimination in 2020. Run by HEKS/EPER under a mandate from the Cantons of St. Gallen and Appenzell Ausserrhoden, the advice centre received 60 enquiries relating to racial discrimination and carried out 249 consultations during the review period. Advice was given to people and institutions with questions relating to protection from discrimination, or having been affected by or accused of racial discrimination.



### LEGAL ADVICE CENTRES FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS DIFFERENT REGIONS

Pandemic and partial lockdown notwithstanding, the HEKS/EPER advice centres had their hands full, as the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) and the Federal Administrative Court continued to work flat out. While reduced travel options meant that only 11 041 new asylum applications were filed in Switzerland in 2020 – substantially less than the 14 269 recorded in the prior year – this allowed the authorities to work off pending applications and wind up asylum procedures dating back to the old law.

Some 9715 counselling sessions were held in 2020 at the seven HEKS/EPER legal advice centres (Aargau, Basel-Stadt and Basellandschaft, Eastern Switzerland, Solothurn, Thurgau, Western Switzerland, Zurich). Asylum seekers and temporarily admitted persons were informed of their rights and duties, the legality of negative decisions was checked and complaints filed if needed. Mandated by the Federal Government, HEKS/EPER legal representatives assisted 600 applicants under the extended procedure, accompanying them to asylum hearings, as required. The uncertainty caused by the virus and the new protective measures compounded the already sensitive circumstances of interviews. Yet even in the pandemic year, HEKS/EPER supported and assisted asylum seekers in claiming their rights.

# HEKS/EPER MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN SWITZERLAND

## HEKS/EPER IN SWITZERLAND

- 1 Regional Office Aargau/Solothurn
- 2 Regional Office both Basels
- 3 Regional Office Berne
- 4 Regional Office Eastern Switzerland (SG/TG/AI/AR)
- 5 Regional Office Zurich/Schaffhausen
- 6 Siège romand (VD/GE/NE)

**Umagowri Veluppillai from Sri Lanka:** «I very much enjoy being part of the HEKS/EPER Visits programme. I learn a lot and meet new people at the monthly group meetings. I did not know many people in Switzerland before now. HEKS/EPER also helped me to find a work placement in a playgroup. Today I have a part-time position with a playgroup.»

«HEKS/EPER Visits» – A structured week and social integration for the unemployed, Aargau/Solothurn Regional Office



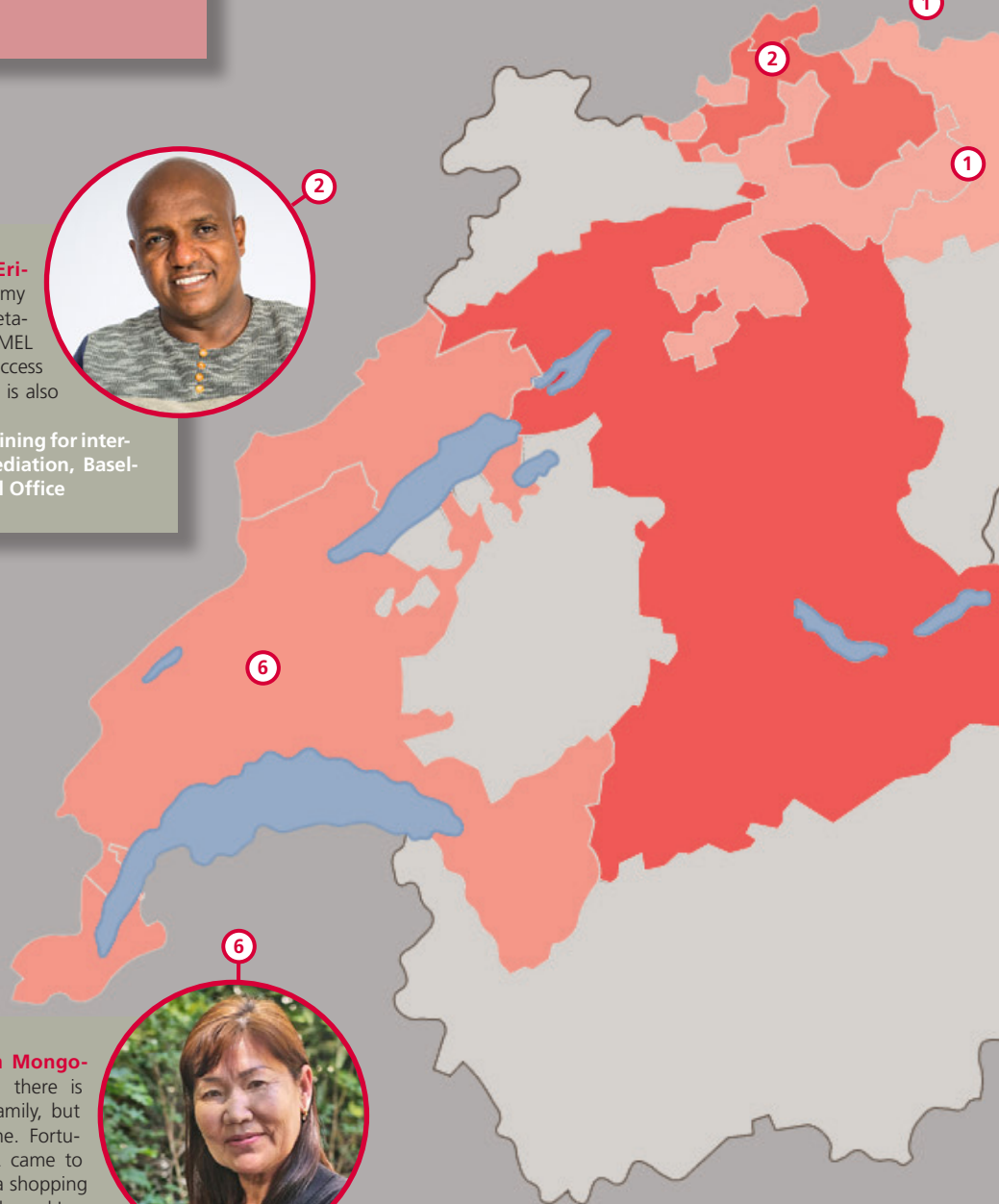
**Kibrom M. Misgina from Eritrea:** «I completed the bulk of my training in intercultural interpretation and mediation under the MEL programme. I think that my success in the professional examination is also that of HEKS/EPER.»

«HEKS/EPER MEL» – Skills training for intercultural interpreting and mediation, Basel-Stadt and Baselland Regional Office



**Ulzii Jargal from Mongolia:** «In Mongolia there is the solidarity of family, but here I am all alone. Fortunately, HEKS/EPER came to my aid. I received a shopping voucher every week, and I was referred to the Red Cross, which paid my rent. This support, both material and psychological, is so important. It reassured me and saved me from panicking.»

«Permanences Volantes» – Multilingual counselling for sans papiers and migrants, Siège romand





**Mahmud W. from Iran:** «Through «HEKS/EPER on Wheels» I learned German and got to meet people. We feel at home in Switzerland. Apart from family members in Iran, we miss nothing.»

«HEKS / EPER on Wheels» – Work and social integration for the unemployed, Zurich / Schaffhausen Regional Office



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**Donia Gudeh from Syria:** «In Switzerland you are of little consequence if you have no qualifications. I did not want to spend the rest of my life doing unskilled jobs. I had completed the school-leaving examination in Syria and dreamed of higher studies. HEKS/EPER helped me to get admitted to the social work programme at the University of Applied Sciences in St. Gallen and to secure funding through scholarships.»

«HEKS / EPER MosaiQ» – Office for qualified migrants from third countries, Eastern Switzerland Regional Office



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**Thomas Weismüller from the Canton of Berne:**

«I have benefited a lot from the HEKS/EPER Job Network programme. Thanks to my job placement, I now have a current and very good job reference. That is worth a lot. I received help with my applications during the weekly course on the subject. I was very happy about that. I am more of a workman than an administrator. The people at the Jobs Network are very good and very competent – I was really pleased with that.»

«HEKS / EPER Job Network» – Job market integration, Berne Regional Office

In the «New Gardens Tandem» programme, migrants and locals cultivate a garden plot together. This gives rise to stimulating cultural interaction.  
Photo: Julie Lovens





# «WE WANT TO PRESERVE OUR FLEXIBILITY»

Covid-19 was also instrumental in shaping the work of HEKS/EPER in 2020. Director Peter Merz assesses an eventful year and looks forward to the tasks and challenges that lie ahead.

## **How did HEKS/EPER cope with the challenges of the corona pandemic in 2020?**

In retrospect, the first wave in March confronted us with an entirely new situation. Our staff nonetheless adapted very quickly to the extraordinary circumstances and have worked mostly from home since then. Our uppermost concern was always to accompany and support our project beneficiaries at home and abroad as best we could through this difficult period, despite all the restrictions associated with Covid-19. In Switzerland, for example, we set up a multilingual telephone helpline or provided food vouchers for migrants and sans papiers (undocumented people) who found themselves in difficulty. We launched Covid-19 information and awareness-raising initiatives in various project countries and, in Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, as well as in Haiti for example, also introduced infection prevention measures such as the production and distribution of protective masks or the upgrading of sanitary conditions. To help our personnel cope with the added strain on them, we set up in-house counselling and support schemes.

## **What conclusions and lessons has HEKS/EPER drawn from the pandemic over recent months?**

Over this period we witnessed an appreciable surge in the digitisation of our daily work. We also had to learn how to mount a rapid, organisation-wide response to new challenges such as a pandemic. In humanitarian aid, this has been par for the course with us, even before Covid-19. In our work in Switzerland, however, doing so with such intensity was largely unknown territory for us. We would like to preserve this new-found nimbleness in developing and rolling out projects. The same goes for introducing more flexibility to our day-to-day work. It has also demonstrated how much can be done by working from home. We

are keen nonetheless to preserve a good balance between remote work and personal contact, among staff as well as with our partners and beneficiaries.



## **What were the principal organisational and operational milestones of 2020?**

Above all else, I am gratified and thankful that we were able through our work, especially at such a globally difficult time, to come to the aid of over a million people – including many experiencing poverty and social injustice or affected by violence, displacement and exclusion. They have been hit particularly hard by this pandemic and will also have to live with its consequences for a long time to come. Our commitment to aiding these people was paramount in 2020 and will remain our top priority for the future.

We also further developed our international programmes for the years 2021–2024 and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has assured us of the corresponding programme contributions for the next two years.

As pertains to the federal mandate from the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) to provide legal representation in the federal asylum centres in North-Western and Eastern Switzerland, we evaluated the experiences gained and also optimised certain procedures under Covid-19 conditions.

One highly meaningful and strategic milestone for the organisation was the approval by the Synod of the Protestant Church in Switzerland (PCS) of the merger with «Bread for All» as of 1 January 2022.

We scaled up cooperation between our head office in Zurich and our business offices in Western Switzerland. One outcome is that operations in Switzerland and abroad, including communications, are now under one leadership. This created synergies and helped to step up interaction between all the regional offices. We then set up a whistleblower unit and established the requisite procedural steps for the professional handling of any future incidents.

## **Uppermost in 2019 was financial stabilisation and consolidation of the operating result. Is HEKS/EPER now back in calmer financial waters?**

We even outperformed our financial targets. We were able for instance to generate additional donations and funds from the Confederation, cantons and from Swiss Solidarity for our Covid-19 projects. Furthermore, we received more bequests than expected. This will enable us to replenish our reserves to some extent.

## **What is the medium-to-long term financial outlook?**

Against the backdrop of the ongoing pandemic, there is still no certainty as to how the income situation may evolve over the next two years. We will be striving to break even again in 2021. We have in fact made certain assumptions for the years immediately after the merger with «Bread for

All», but it is hard to foresee just how the hoped-for synergies will pan out financially.

### **Is the merger with «Bread for All» on track? What is there still to be done?**

It was already clear in early 2020 that the amalgamation originally set for 2021 would take a bit longer. That was doubtless a good decision, as the one-year postponement has allowed us some more time especially for the rather complex process of merging the financial systems as well as the data and address management systems, and for transferring employment contracts and developing the new corporate identity. The merger of both organisations at the programmatic level is also still in progress. Thereafter, the two different corporate cultures will have to be melded into a common understanding for the new organisation.

### **What have been the key insights gained so far from this merger process**

### **for the future work and positioning of the new organisation?**

It is paramount to develop a shared perspective as well as fields of endeavour that are appealing to the staff of both organisations. It is indispensable for the staff of both agencies to be ready to engage with one another. This process takes time. It is also clear that not all pending matters will have been fully resolved by 1 January 2022. Moreover, to some extent a merger such as this is invariably a «work in progress».

### **What are HEKS/EPER's goals for the year 2021?**

Our main organisational goal is the successful completion of the merger process so that we can be a functional new organisation as of January 2022. Project work in Switzerland and abroad for the benefit of underprivileged people will be a central concern in 2021 as well. Furthermore,

we must adequately meet the numerous challenges for our projects arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and also preserve our flexibility such that we can in future also devise rapid responses to unforeseen developments, for the good of our beneficiaries. Lastly, as an NGO we are keen to remain a relevant player, one committed to implementing human rights in our programme countries and here in Switzerland, and also one that takes forthright policy stances in this regard.

**Further information on how HEKS/EPER works:**  
[en.heks.ch/working-principles](https://en.heks.ch/working-principles)

## **CAMPAIGNS, ACTIONS AND EVENTS IN THE YEAR 2020 – AN OVERVIEW**

In addition to specific project work in Switzerland and internationally, HEKS/EPER undertook considerable awareness-raising and information work in the year 2020 through various campaigns, events and publications.

### **Easter appeal: evacuate refugees**

In Europe too, there are refugees living in camps under catastrophic and unsanitary conditions on some Greek Aegean islands. For them the corona pandemic posed yet another life-threatening danger. HEKS/EPER therefore renewed its call for legal access routes into Switzerland. In the #EasterAppeal 2020, HEKS/EPER joined 110 other organisations in calling on the Federal Council to evacuate as many refugees as possible from the Greek islands.

### **Dignity for the elderly**

Our 2020 fundraising campaign focused on Romania's Transylvania region, where HEKS/EPER is assisting the Hungarian Reformed Church in developing and expanding a home care service inspired by the Swiss model. This service is more crucial than ever for elderly residents of rural Transylvania, especially during the current Covid-19 pandemic.

### **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants**

Since 2018 the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas have been laid out in this UN Declaration. Jointly with six other Swiss non-governmental organisations, HEKS/EPER published a related study on Swiss foreign policy in the areas of trade, seeds, land rights and development cooperation. A list of demands was submitted to the federal offices.

### **«Church cooperation» Day: All inclusive?!**

The traditional HEKS/EPER conference on church cooperation in Eastern Europe and the Middle East took place in January 2020 under the motto «All inclusive?!» Programme leaders and guest speakers used various presentations and workshops to report on progress made and obstacles encountered in the coexistence of different cultures and religions.

### **Responsible Business Initiative**

HEKS/EPER has co-sponsored the Responsible Business Initiative (RBI) since its launch in 2017. A hard-fought referendum campaign ended in defeat for the popular initiative on 29 November 2020 due to a

majority cantonal vote. The initiative can be credited, among other things, with inducing the widest ever acceptance that respect for the universal human rights and the effective guarantee of fair working conditions are crucial to the success of the Swiss economy.

### **Solidarity during the corona pandemic**

Already in mid-March 2020 when the first Covid-19 wave reached Switzerland, HEKS/EPER launched the first solidarity campaign urging the Swiss people to help the weakest here at home and in poor countries in the South through what was an especially tough time for them. At the same time, various HEKS/EPER regional offices added Covid-19-specific elements to their existing programmes or launched entirely new ones, such as a multilingual helpline, a learning and homework aid for children from socially disadvantaged families, or «CoronaNews», in the form of weekly information videos for migrants. Awareness and prevention measures were implemented in many project countries to protect people against becoming infected by the coronavirus.

# ORGANIZATION AND PRINCIPLES

## HEKS/EPER – 75 YEARS CHAMPIONING A LIFE OF DIGNITY

HEKS/EPER is the aid organization of the Swiss Protestant Churches founded in 1946 by the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches (FSPC), today the «Protestant Church in Switzerland» (PCS). HEKS/EPER became a foundation in 2004. HEKS/EPER maintains its Head Office in Zurich and a business office for French-speaking Switzerland in Lausanne.

As the aid organization of the Swiss Protestant Churches, the dignity of every human being is central to the commitment of HEKS/EPER. All human beings should be able to lead a life of dignity and in social, economic and political security. HEKS/EPER assists people in need irrespective of their religious or ethnic background.

HEKS/EPER operations adhere to the specifications of the Zewo Quality Label. The Zewo seal of approval distinguishes non-profit organizations that utilize donations economically, effectively and for their designated purpose.

## MERGER OF HEKS/EPER AND «BREAD FOR ALL»

The year 2020 brought substantial progress on the merger of HEKS/EPER and «Bread for All» (Bfa), decided in 2019. At its Synod on 15 June 2020 the Protestant Church in Switzerland (PCS) approved the merger in principle, while tabling some proposals regarding the identity and future direction of the amalgamated body. Representatives of Bfa, HEKS/EPER, the PCS and the cantonal churches held a virtual meeting in September to begin working out initial responses to those proposals. The matters then taken up will be further dealt with over the next two years by a joint working group comprising representatives of the churches and the two agencies.

At its Synod on 2 November, the PCS finally approved the merger, and the foundation statutes for the merged entity were adopted.

The legal implementation of the merger can therefore now proceed in the course of 2021. The new agency will begin work on 1 January 2022 under the name «Swiss Church Aid» (HEKS/EPER).

## RESULTS-ORIENTED ACTION

HEKS/EPER projects aim for the best possible outcomes for beneficiaries, and the agency therefore systematically monitors the impacts of its work. Project monitoring is a continuous process based on digital data, and project assessments are done regularly after 3 to 4-year project phases. In addition, each year HEKS/EPER conducts an in-depth impact assessment, with outside support. This assessment serves HEKS/EPER not just for the purposes of accountability to project participants and donors, but also for constantly optimising project work.

For instance, a project under way since 2015 to secure land rights for peasant families in Senegal was assessed in 2020. The evaluation revealed that the knowledge transmitted under the project had been instrumental in helping peasant families in their political struggle for land rights and, on balance, had helped to improve access to land for their communities. Yet it was still not possible to secure the long-term land rights of the local people, as the planned land reform had become bogged down owing to fierce opposition from the private sector and political circles. This is to be a major focus in the project phase starting in 2021. Peasant farmers will be assisted in modifying their strategy and more effectively lobbying local and national authorities for their land rights.

## TRANSPARENCY

Projects do not always have the desired impacts, nor do they always achieve the targets set. For HEKS/EPER, transparency means comprehensively informing the public and in particular its donors and clients about its work, structures, as well as the origin, use and impacts of the funds disbursed. Failures and setbacks too must be discussed. HEKS/EPER has laid out its

transparency principles in a code of conduct and reviews compliance with them each year. This year's report on transparency has revealed a gratifying result: HEKS/EPER fully met 41 of 50 transparency targets, and the remaining ones in part.



## ACCOUNTABILITY

Relying on various compliance tools, HEKS/EPER effectively discharges its duty to donors, clients, workers and beneficiaries to engage in transparent and responsible



governance. All staffers of HEKS/EPER and partner organisations in project countries are bound by a code of conduct, to be ethically irreproachable in their conduct. Furthermore, a new Good Governance Policy was introduced in 2020.

In the knowledge that even the best precautions can never entirely rule out irregularities, HEKS/EPER already set up an internal whistleblower unit some years ago for its work abroad and appointed an «Anti-corruption officer» in each country office. In introducing the online platform «HEKS/EPER Integrity Line» in 2020, HEKS/EPER expanded existing channels by creating an additional, technically independent whistleblower system. It is a channel through which not just workers but also partners and project beneficiaries abroad and in Switzerland may file complaints anonymously and simply. Complaints are investigated confidentially and if suspicions are substantiated, breaches are effectively penalised. The whistleblower unit handled two complaints during the review period.

## RESPONSIBLE NGO COMMUNICATIONS

Through their communications and fundraising campaigns, NGOs help to mould public perceptions of the global South and the mental picture of development cooperation held by the Swiss public. Regrettably, stereotypes are often reproduced in the process and the broader context of development cooperation, more specifically the structural, systemic causes of poverty and exclusion, is broached only marginally. The upshot is that the public perception is almost devoid of any concrete notion of the workings and impacts of development cooperation. To counteract this, HEKS/EPER joined forces with the member and partner organisations of «Alliance Sud» to initiate a Swiss-wide study on public perceptions of development cooperation. This in turn led to the joint elaboration of the «Manifesto for responsible NGO communications» [Manifest für verantwortungsvolle NGO-Kommunikation], which lays out seven

sector-specific guidelines for responsible communications in international cooperation. In 2020, HEKS/EPER committed itself to the manifesto, thereby pledging to implement the guidelines in its own communications. HEKS/EPER must now analyse and where necessary adjust its communications model so as to convey as nuanced as possible a picture of development cooperation.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainable and environment-friendly project work at home and abroad is of crucial importance to HEKS/EPER in the light of climate change. Wherever possible, HEKS/EPER therefore strives, through climate protection projects, to offset the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions it causes.

Owing to Covid-19, international official travel (and the associated CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) was cut back sharply to 471 000 kilometres in 2020, or 42% of the air mileage covered in 2019. HEKS/EPER is keen to learn from this experience and to analyse when future official travel can be replaced with virtual meeting formats, and when face-to-face meetings and on-site verification may still be needed. In this way, HEKS/EPER plans to further reduce the air mileage travelled by its staff.

**More about HEKS/EPER:**  
[en.heks.ch/portrait](https://en.heks.ch/portrait)

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES



**Walter Schmid, President**, Winterthur  
Dr. iur. Lawyer; Lecturer and Visiting Lecturer at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and the University of Lucerne.



**Michèle Künzler, Vice-President**, Vernier  
Theology Studies; current Head of the Department of Business Taxation, Municipality of Thônex; former Cantonal Councillor, Canton of Geneva.



**Rolf Berweger**, Zug  
Swiss-certified Banker; various management positions in the financial sector in Switzerland and abroad; Church Council President of the Reformed Church of the Canton of Zug.



**Jean-Luc Dupuis**, Semsales  
Computer Engineer; Senior project manager at a major bank; former President of several church parishes.



**Simone Fopp Müller**, Köniz  
Dr. theol. at the University of Berne in Practical Theology; Pastor, Zollikofen Reformed Church Parish.



**Daniel Reuter**, Zürich  
Parliamentary Secretary; MAS ZFH Supervision and Coaching in Organizations.



**Fritz Schneider**, Bremgarten b. Bern  
Agric. Engineer (ETH); M.A. degree, University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada; adviser on development cooperation since 2015.

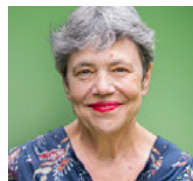


**Christoph Sigrist**, Zurich  
Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Theology, University of Berne; Pastor, Grossmünster Zurich.

## MANAGEMENT



**Peter Merz, Director**  
M.A. in Environmental Engineering (ETH), Postgraduate in Business Management (ETH); Diploma of Advanced Studies in Leadership. With HEKS/EPER since 2009.



**Carmen Meyer, Head of the National Division**  
Remedial teacher and Doctor; Dr. med. M.Sc Tropical Medicine; MAS ETH Development and Cooperation. At HEKS/EPER since 2020.



**Bernhard Kerschbaum, Head of the International Division**  
Graduate Economist; banker; Advanced Training in Security/Crisis Management, Intern. Negotiations and Conflict Transformation. With HEKS/EPER since 2013.



**Hanspeter Bigler, Head of Communications Division**  
Lic. phil. History and Philosophy; Dipl. NPO Management; Master of Advanced Studies in Communication Management. With HEKS/EPER since 2006.



**Simone Knobel, Head of Services Division**  
Master's in Strategy and Intern. Management HSG; Master's in Compliance and Master's in Advanced Studies in Applied Ethics. At HEKS/EPER since 2020.

### REMUNERATION FOR THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND MANAGEMENT

Remuneration for the Board of Trustees amounted to 40'630 francs in 2020, of which 30'380 francs went to the Presiding Committee.

Remuneration for the Executive Board in 2020 (including employer contributions) was 813'806 francs, of which 155'430 francs went to the management.

The ratio between the lowest and the highest wage paid by HEKS/EPER in 2020 was 1:2,88.



# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

as at 31.12.2020

<b>PRESIDENT</b> Walter Schmid	<b>VICE-PRESIDENT</b> Michèle Künzler	Rolf Berweger, Jean-Luc Dupuis, Simone Fopp Müller, Daniel Reuter, Fritz Schneider, Christoph Sigrist	
<b>MANAGEMENT</b>			
<b>DIRECTOR</b> Peter Merz	<b>HEADS OF DEPARTMENT AND REGIONAL OFFICES (RO)</b>		
<b>INTERNATIONAL DIVISION</b> Bernhard Kerschbaum	<b>AFRICA/LATIN AMERICA</b> Regula Hafner	<b>ASIA/EUROPE</b> Marc Zoss	<b>HUMANITARIAN AID</b> Nathalie Praz
	<b>THEMATIC</b> Martin Schmid		
<b>NATIONAL DIVISION</b> Carmen Meyer	<b>RO AARGAU/SOLOTHURN</b> Andreas Burri	<b>RO BOTH BASELS</b> Christine Giustizieri	<b>RO BERNE</b> Ronald Baeriswyl
	<b>RO EASTERN SWITZERLAND</b> Gabriela Alfanz	<b>RO ZURICH/SCHAFFHAUSEN</b> Olivia Payo Moreno	<b>SIÈGE ROMAND</b> Olivier Ferrari
<b>COMMUNICATIONS</b> Hanspeter Bigler	<b>MARKETING/FUNDRAISING</b> Brigitte Roth	<b>MEDIA/INFORMATION</b> Dieter Wüthrich	<b>COMMUNICATIONS SIÈGE ROMAND</b> Laurine Jobin
<b>SERVICES</b> Simone Knobel	<b>HUMAN RESOURCES</b> Yvonne Zinniker	<b>FINANCES/CONTROLLING</b> Christian Defilippi	<b>IT</b> Jürg Kraft

## NETWORKS, PARTNERS AND ALLIANCES

In its worldwide efforts to promote a humane and just world, HEKS/EPER works with national and international umbrella organizations, working groups and thematic associations.

### SWISS AND INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS AND WORKING GROUPS

- ACT Alliance (network of 125 churches and church institutions)
- Age and Migration national forum
- Aguasan
- Alliance Sud
- Beam Exchange
- Blue Community Network (network to enforce the human right to water as a public Good)
- Bread for All
- CHS Alliance (Core Humanitarian Standard Alliance)
- Conflict Sensitivity Community Hub
- several SDC networks
- EFECW – Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women
- FAO NGO Working Group
- Friends of the UNDROP
- GISF – Global Interagency Security Forum
- Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition
- Homecare Network Eastern Europe
- ICCA Consortium
- International Land Coalition (in process)
- INTERPRET
- KOFF / Swisspeace (platform of Swiss organizations engaged in peacebuilding)
- Max Havelaar Foundation
- Platform Agenda 2030 Switzerland
- Platteform sans-papiers
- NGO Platform Human Rights
- Right to Food and Nutrition Network
- SEVAL (Swiss Evaluation Society)
- SKOS Swiss Conference of Welfare Organizations
- Swiss Climate Alliance
- Swiss Forum on Rural Advisory Services
- Swiss NGO DRR Platform
- Swiss NGO Platform
- Swiss Refugee Aid
- Swiss Security Network
- Swiss Solidarity
- Swiss Water Partnership (SWP)
- Texaid
- Transparency International – Switzerland
- Verband Arbeitsintegration Schweiz
- Verein Gleichstellungs-Controlling
- WIDE Switzerland
- WCC World Council of Churches

**More information on networks, partners, alliances:**  
[en.heks.ch/who-we-are](http://en.heks.ch/who-we-are)

# FINANCIAL REPORT

## GENERAL NOTES TO THE ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

### Overview

Operating income was 78,8 million francs, a figure that exceeded expectations, while expenditure of 73,2 million francs was below the preliminary estimate.

HEKS/EPER earmarked altogether 61,4 million francs for 198 projects abroad and in Switzerland. Some 12,9 million francs went to supporting development cooperation projects in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. A further 2,1 million francs were allocated to church cooperation in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. HEKS/EPER also provided 11,3 million francs worth of humanitarian aid in the wake of droughts and natural disasters as well as in conflict zones. In Switzerland, HEKS/EPER spent 27,0 million francs as follows: 17,7 million francs for projects to promote inclusion for socially underprivileged people and 8,9 million francs for legal advice to asylum seekers, recognized refugees and other target groups.

### Income

Despite greater economic pressure in a highly competitive environment especially as pertains to international mandates as well as contracts from the cantons for work to be done in Switzerland, it was still possible to generate positive operating income of 5,6 million francs. This is attributable for the most part to increased donations from private and institutional donors for Covid-19 programmes both locally and abroad. The result was therefore roughly 11,1 million francs higher than the previous year's figure (2019: minus 5,5 million francs).

Income from work in Switzerland amounted to 32,9 million francs, which represented 42 per cent of overall income. Cantonal churches, church parishes and other church organizations contributed 11,3 million francs (14 per cent). The breakdown of the 18,9 million francs (24 per cent) in contributions from the Confederation, cantons and municipalities was as follows: 16,7 million (21 per cent) from private persons and 2.5 million (3 per cent) from Swiss Solidarity. Income accruing to the five German-speaking Regional Offices and the Siège romand for their services contributed 17,2 million francs (22 per cent) to the overall result.

### Expenditure

Expenditure for development cooperation was below the budgeted amount. Spending on humanitarian aid, in contrast,

recorded an increase based on project-specific funding commitments. Meanwhile, expenditure for work in Switzerland remained below budget for the most part.

Investment in international work declined mostly with respect to projects in Europe (down 1,4 million francs), principally in Moldova and Romania. There was also a fall-off in investment in Latin America and Asia (down 1,8 million francs), more specifically in Colombia, Haiti and Palestine/Israel. The prevailing political instability in some project countries as well as more difficult operating environments caused by financial restrictions and embargoes were also among the reasons for the downturn in expenditure.

Compared to the previous year, humanitarian aid spending varied significantly, depending on the project country. There was an increase of 1,5 million francs in overall expenditure, covering the following countries, among others: Bangladesh (up 1,1 million francs), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DCR) (up 2,5 million francs), Venezuela (up 0,5 million francs), Ethiopia (up 0,5 million francs) and Lebanon (up 0,3 million francs). In contrast, expenditure diminished in several other regions. This affected, for example Iraq (down 1,4 million francs), Indonesia (down 0,7 million francs) and Zimbabwe (down 0,5 million francs).

Spending was less in all regional offices in Switzerland, among other things, owing to the contraction in the volume of contracts for asylum and migration-related projects. But that contraction in volume was also a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to a sharp drop in the number of participants in various programmes.

### Administrative costs

The share of administrative costs in overall expenditure (11,8 million francs) was 16,1 per cent (Zewo guideline). HEKS/EPER therefore continues below the average for Zewo-certified non-profit organizations (21 per cent).

### Financial and real estate income

Income from real estate increased to 0,2 million francs. In spite of the adverse conditions that prevailed on stock markets, asset investments yielded a net book profit of 0,7 million francs. The value fluctuation reserves therefore had to be replenished by 0,6 million francs, at the expense of the operating result.

### Funding trends

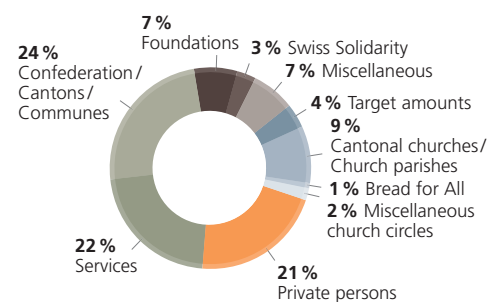
Owing to the difference between expenditure and income, 6,2 million francs had to be taken from operating income (2019: a withdrawal of 3,3 million francs) and allocated to existing funds for work in Switzerland and work abroad. Fund capital therefore now stands at 37,7 million francs: work in Switzerland, 11,6 million francs, work abroad, 17,2 million francs, and humanitarian aid, 8,9 million francs.

### Result

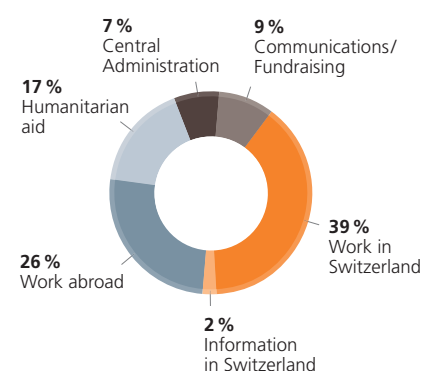
In addition to increasing the value fluctuation reserves (by 0,6 million francs), an amount of 0,1 million francs was withdrawn from the organization's free capital, and an amount of 0,3 million francs from tied capital. This balances the annual result.

## ORIGIN AND USE OF FUNDS 2020

### Total income: CHF 78,8 million



### Total expenditure for provision of services: CHF 73,2 million



PDF version of full Financial Report at: [en.heks.ch/financial-report](http://en.heks.ch/financial-report)

**BALANCE SHEET** in CHF

	31.12.19	31.12.20
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	18'569'942	21'364'030
Securities listed on a stock exchange	21'275'819	23'080'925
Receivables	6'006'213	10'829'436
Prepaid expenses and accrued income	2'184'313	2'214'106
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>48'036'287</b>	<b>57'488'496</b>
Financial assets	3'374'290	3'191'005
Property, plant and equipment	4'844'475	4'843'355
Intangible assets	617'615	526'484
Earmarked properties	1'814'504	1'769'047
<b>Total non-current assets</b>	<b>10'650'884</b>	<b>10'329'892</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>58'687'171</b>	<b>67'818'388</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Trade accounts payable	1'702'907	1'193'772
Other short-term liabilities	4'922'516	5'817'483
Accrued expenses and deferred income	1'976'819	4'168'342
<b>Total short-term liabilities</b>	<b>8'602'241</b>	<b>11'179'596</b>
Long-term financial liabilities	1'000'000	1'000'000
Provisions	828'037	916'686
<b>Total long-term liabilities</b>	<b>1'828'037</b>	<b>1'916'686</b>
<b>Total earmarked funds</b>	<b>31'478'307</b>	<b>37'728'671</b>
<b>Total liabilities including fund capital</b>	<b>41'908'585</b>	<b>50'824'953</b>
Foundation capital	200'000	200'000
Unrestricted capital	9'236'370	9'160'215
Tied capital	7'342'216	7'633'220
<b>Total capital of the organization</b>	<b>16'778'586</b>	<b>16'993'435</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>58'687'171</b>	<b>67'818'388</b>

**STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS** in CHF

	31.12.19	31.12.20
Income for work in Switzerland	31'165'205	32'907'148
Income for work abroad (excl. humanitarian aid)	18'882'346	23'424'827
Income for humanitarian aid	6'777'105	11'349'735
Non-earmarked income	11'568'078	11'135'817
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>68'392'735</b>	<b>78'817'527</b>
Expenditure for work in Switzerland	29'091'537	28'822'926
Expenditure for information in Switzerland	1'181'443	1'060'221
Expenditure for work abroad (excl. humanitarian aid)	21'934'098	18'908'965
Total expenditure humanitarian aid	11'129'639	12'631'630
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE PROJECT WORK</b>	<b>63'336'718</b>	<b>61'423'741</b>
Central Administration	4'470'772	4'966'580
Communications (net expenditure)	2'833'022	2'625'391
Fundraising (net expenditure)	3'216'871	4'219'548
<b>Administration and communications</b>	<b>10'520'664</b>	<b>11'811'519</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE FOR PROVISION OF SERVICEES</b>	<b>73'857'383</b>	<b>73'235'261</b>
<b>OPERATING RESULT</b>	<b>-5'464'648</b>	<b>5'582'266</b>
Financial income on investments	3'044'704	743'040
Financial costs of investments	-246'227	-21'387
Real estate performance	139'654	161'293
Extraordinary, non-recurring or prior period expenditure and income	0	0
<b>RESULT BEFORE CHANGE IN FUND CAPITAL</b>	<b>-2'526'517</b>	<b>6'465'213</b>
Fund changes: increase (-)/decrease (+)	3'316'163	-6'250'364
<b>Total fund changes</b>	<b>3'316'163</b>	<b>-6'250'364</b>
<b>ANNUAL RESULT (BEFORE ALLOCATIONS TO ORGANIZATIONAL CAPITAL)</b>	<b>789'646</b>	<b>214'849</b>
Change in tied capital (allocation - / withdrawal +): Strategic development projects organization-wide	182'014	285'151
Change in tied capital (allocation - / withdrawal +): Value fluctuation reserve	-528'933	-576'155
Change in free capital (allocation - / withdrawal +):	-442'727	76'155
	0	0

**THANK YOU**

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**SWISS CHURCH AID**

**Head Office**  
Seminarstrasse 28  
P.O. Box  
8042 Zurich

Tel. 044 360 88 00  
Fax 044 360 88 01  
[en.heks.ch/english](http://en.heks.ch/english)  
PC 80-1115-1