



Non-Discrimination and Inclusion

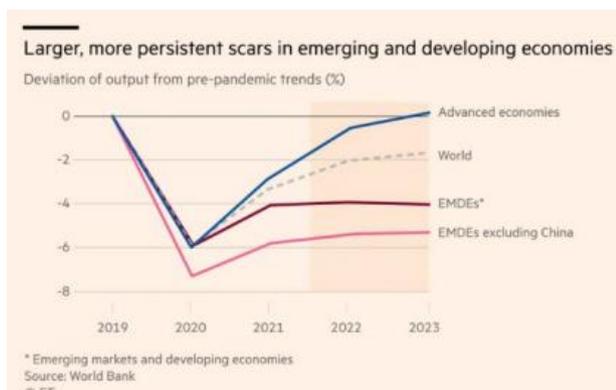
HEKS/EPER Global Cooperation's strategy, promising practices, achievements and perspectives on overcoming economic, social and political discrimination.

Why Non-Discrimination & Inclusion Matter

Global Challenges – Context

Over the last decades, significant progress in terms of poverty reduction and human development has been achieved worldwide. Nevertheless, many groups remain excluded from this positive trend. Multiple sources provide evidence that inequality is still increasing worldwide.¹ 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. 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. In addition, the coronavirus pandemic has led to a massive increase in inequalities of wealth, gender and race. 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 thriving².

Increasing inequalities



Economic output recovered after 2020/21 pandemic crises in advanced economies but emerging markets and developing economies struggle to get back on track – the war of Russia against the Ukraine and the zero-Covid-strategy of China will reduce the trends for 2022/23 with EMDE probably decreasing. Source Worldbank 2022.

The global inequality report 2022 shows evidence that income and wealth inequalities have been rising nearly everywhere since 1980. However, the rise has wasn't equal. Certain countries experienced spectacular increases in inequality, while others experienced relatively smaller rises. Based on this data, the report deduces that inequality is not inevitable but a political choice.

Moreover, the report emphasises the gap between the wealth of governments and the wealth of private actors; the richest private persons and companies have become richer, but governments have become poorer. Furthermore, the report refers to gender inequalities that remain considerable at the global level, with too slow progress, and to the growing ecological inequality and the related data evidencing that inequalities are not just a rich vs

poor country issue, but rather 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 one group from

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.

¹ 76% of global wealth 2021 went to the top 10%, while the bottom half of humanity saw only 2% of the global wealth (World Inequality Report 2022).

² OXFAM, 2021: The inequality virus.

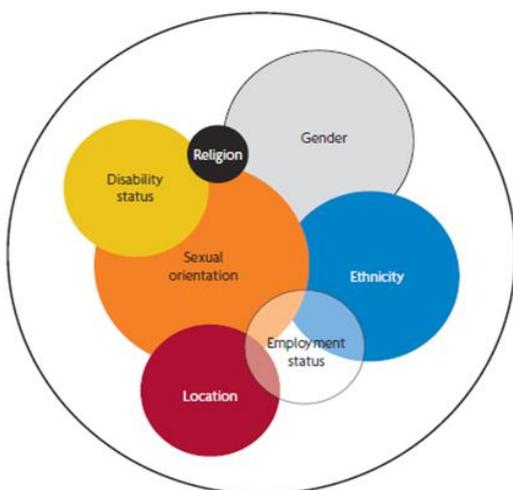
opportunities that are available to others³. Discrimination is not only about what is being explicitly said in public but also implicit messages and practices and what is not being said or done. International experience of the past years shows that empowerment and access to services for excluded people 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 is not inevitable but also 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.

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 do not only face 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 instruments⁴ to combat specific forms of discrimination.

How HEKS/EPER responds - 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 by 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).

For HEKS/EPER, it is key to know these intersections and consider them when working towards social inclusion and non-discrimination. 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



Multiple, intersecting identities: Figure shows an illustrative example of types of identities.

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, that hinders the communities' access to agro-services and productive resources, such as credit, seeds, land and water), while in other contexts they live a simple, but equated life.

Social inclusion encompasses access to basic services (education, health, etc.), land and resources, labour and markets, social and cultural spaces, and inclusive and participatory governance structures. Combating discrimination is an integral step towards social inclusion. There is evidence that many efforts towards social inclusion are ineffective as long as discrimination against the

³ HEKS/EPER 2011 Conflict Transformation Implementation Concept: Equal Rights and Conflict Transformation p.8.

⁴ 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](#).

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 to 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 groups⁵, 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 Dalit and Adibashi

In Bangladesh, HEKS/EPER strengthens the social inclusion of Dalits and plain land ethnic minorities living in the Northwest with a human rights-based approach. 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 2022 reached in 12 districts 47'433 Dalit and Adibashi directly supporting their social, economic and political inclusion – another 237'165 were reached indirectly benefitting from more supportive policies. To achieve this goal, HEKS/EPER Bangladesh has partnered with local NGOs like ARCO (till September 2022, DASCOH, and ESDO as implementation partners for strategic and technical partnerships collaborated with UNDP, PET, and CML. To ensure the social Inclusion of Dalit and Adibashi in the Northwest of Bangladesh, HEKS/EPER is striving to achieve 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.

The story of Rena Hemram



Rena Hemram is an Adibashi village woman, who lives in the Dinajpur, born into poverty where discrimination exists due to her ethnicity and gender. She and her big family got seriously affected by Covid-19 pandemic. Rena participates since 2021 in a HEKS/EPER project, received cash-support that allowed her to buy farm animals and to start a vermicompost production. Empowered by the awareness sessions of the project, Rena began to raise her voice against discrimination and to take leadership for family decisions. Now self-sufficient and self-employed, Rena Hemram cherishes a dream of expanding her vermicompost venture in the future to contribute supplementary income for her family.

⁵ 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.

- 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.

Romania – inclusion of persons with disabilities in Transylvania

Since 2015, HEKS/EPER has facilitated, together with the local Diakonia, the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Sfântu Gheorghe, Oradea, Bistrița and Reghin City in Romania. The inclusion of 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 2022, several sensitisation events were held with church leaders and members as well as the wider society. One example is a travelling exhibition of art pieces produced by people with disabilities. The exhibition started at the Romanian Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity in Bucharest in early April and continued to other places throughout Romania. In each place, special public events were organised to promote the exhibition and raise awareness about the need for stronger inclusion of people with disabilities in society.

Nine small projects were realised by local church congregations in 2022, including joint activities for youth and young adults with and without disabilities, occupational support for adults with reduced mobility, and awareness-raising activities among church members.

The project does not only provide 'protected jobs' but also promotes the economic and social inclusion of people with disabilities in the mainstream job market and society: Two special job mediation offices in Sfântu Gheorghe and Bistrita help people with disabilities to find a job and useful occupation, to lead self-determined lives, and to find their way to achieve greater social inclusion.

In 2022, 36 companies were included in the job mediation, and 19 employees with disabilities could be newly hired and supported in Sfântu Gheorghe, Bistrita and their surroundings.

Romania – inclusion of people with disabilities



4 shelters provide protected jobs for people with disabilities. Two job mediation centers in Sfântu Gheorghe and Bistrita counsel persons with disabilities and employers.

Hundreds of people in the wider society are sensitized for social inclusion of disabled and elderly people.

Senegal – support for traditional pastoralist food systems in the Senegalese Sahel

The northeastern part of Senegal, called 'Ferlo', is home to semi-nomadic pastoralists. Their **lifestyle and production system** is 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. Additionally, 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 that 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.

Eastern Europe – Establishing effective mechanisms to address antigypsyism and discrimination and enhancing labour market inclusion of Roma job seekers.

Roma people are among the most excluded groups in Central and Eastern Europe, with levels of poverty and extreme poverty at least twice as high as in the majority population and very high unemployment rates. Recent consultations with a broad spectrum of actors working on social inclusion in Europe concluded that the failure to effectively address antigypsyism and discrimination as a root cause for social exclusion is among the most important problem drivers and that it is of particular importance to address institutional discrimination both in public institutions and in the labour market to make programmes for social inclusion work sustainably.

Thus, HEKS/EPER puts particular emphasis on actively addressing discrimination and antigypsyism (specifically racism against Roma people) through its Regional Programme for Social Inclusion and Equality in Eastern Europe, both by advocating for effective policies and institutional mechanisms to combat antigypsyism and by supporting sensitisation activities that aim at long term behaviour changes on all levels of society. The programme sensitised and trained more than 3000 public officials and service providers in the past three years. More than 300 antidiscriminatory actions were stimulated through small grant schemes in schools, media, and public spaces. In Kosovo, 74% of public officials who have participated in one-day sensitisation sessions were able to identify manifestations of antigypsyism when surveyed 3-8 months after the training. Of the 46% who reported that they had witnessed a case of direct/indirect discrimination against R/A/E, 95% have acted to prevent and/or counter it.



Addressing antigypsyism – exchange within Roma community.

In Kosovo, the programme successfully established a National Platform to report discrimination. Following the advocacy efforts and technical support of HEKS/EPER and its partners, the Office for Good Governance within the Prime Minister's Office in Kosovo established a working group combating discrimination, which is responsible for dealing institutionally with cases and manifestations of antigypsyism, including cases reported through the National Reporting Platform launched in June 2022. The virtual platform consists of a website, a database, and a mobile application and is regularly updated with policy materials and practical assistance for reporting cases. In parallel, the project strengthened awareness-raising and information activities for Roma communities, which contributed to building trust in the new mechanism. So far, citizens reported 14 cases of discrimination, 8 of which are being investigated by the relevant authorities.

The platform also strengthens cooperation between institutions, civil society, the media and citizens to prevent and combat discrimination against the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Furthermore, this online platform will directly contribute to the collection of national statistics.

As part of Social Inclusion Projects in **Romania** and **Kosovo**, HEKS/EPER has developed project components on economic inclusion, aiming at a better **labour market inclusion of disadvantaged Roma** job seekers. The interventions were constantly adapted during implementation, shifting from formal vocational education to tailor-made /on-the-job training and job mediation.

In **Romania**, over 900 secondary school students benefited from career counselling and orientation each school year. Over 600 professional students in the final classes received counselling and developed skills for job search. Starting with the 2021-2022 school year, another line of intervention is piloted, dedicated to counselling socially disadvantaged girls from secondary schools (4th to 6th grade) and their families regarding the importance of education, the rights of girls to education and the advantages of continuing education. In 2022, all counselled girls continued their studies. Over 94% of the secondary school graduates transitioned to 9th grade (either to high school or to professional education); 92 out of 619 graduates from 2021-2021 promotion were employed, while 52 continued their education.



Romania: Training and job placement especially for girls from disadvantaged families.

The main activities to reach this goal were networking and job mediation with private companies and public institutions. Since 2019/2020, the focus has been on quality rather than quantity. Candidates continue to be mentored during the job mediation process to improve their chances of insertion into the labour market. A study conducted in 2019/2020 showed that the retention rate of jobseekers from vulnerable groups could be increased when employers adequately support them during the induction period in their new jobs and actively create a culture of mutual respect. Thus, besides students' and families' counselling, HEKS/EPER and its

partners also aim to build the capacities of teachers and employers to understand better and support socially disadvantaged students or employees. In 2022, over 100 teachers participated in training sessions or workshops on inclusive education and career counselling and orientation, and 24 companies' representatives were trained on post-employment inclusion and increasing the retention rate. Depending on the project region, the retention rate at three months for the graduates employed in 2022 was between 85% and 90%. Another aim was to strengthen professional education by improving the abilities of professional schools to cooperate with the private sector. In 2022, seven curricula were jointly developed by professional schools and companies.

In **Kosovo**, the combination of internships co-funded by employers, local employment offices and the project successfully facilitated the transition from education to employment for young Roma men and women. Addressing the low levels of participation of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in the labour market, HEKS/EPER and its partners continued to advocate towards public and private institutions for increased employment of these communities. Active networking with companies addressing their fears and stereotypes played a crucial role here. Supported by the project, the Office of Good Governance developed an Institutional Mechanism for promoting employment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in the Republic of Kosovo, which was included in the Governmental Operational Plan in 2022. A working group was established to implement the mechanism based on the jointly developed action plan.

During the reporting period, 60 young R/A/E women and men participated in the internship program, and 126 were job mediated and referred to private and public institutions for employment. So far, 32 got employed directly through these programs, while 75 R/A/E were employed in private companies cooperating with the employment agency.

Achievements & Perspectives

Achievements over 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 2022, about 18'550 people got access to basic services such as health services, education, public job and social schemes or infrastructure such as water, electricity, etc.

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

In **Africa** and **Latin America**, HEKS/EPER contribute to overcoming discrimination and fights for equal rights for land-less, 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 the fulfilment of women's rights and includes women and youth in all its engagements.



Bangladesh: Overcoming discrimination of Dalit and Adibashi communities.

Achievements 2022

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). 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.

In Eastern Europe, HEKS/EPER does not only work with its development cooperation approach but also with church organisations that focus on social inclusion of marginalised women and men, often elderly or disabled people.

HEKS/EPER enabled **access to basic services** for 63'269 people (2021: 42'400)⁶. 62% are girls or women, and 51% belong to discriminated groups. In Bangladesh, Niger, DR Congo, Haiti, Romania, Serbia and Kosovo, 27'275 people benefited from individual, and 35'994 of group services in 2022. 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 more than 20'000 people directly, and 100'000 indirectly (supportive policies) to overcome discrimination - out of them about 18'550 people got access to basic services such as health services, education, public job and social schemes or infrastructure such as

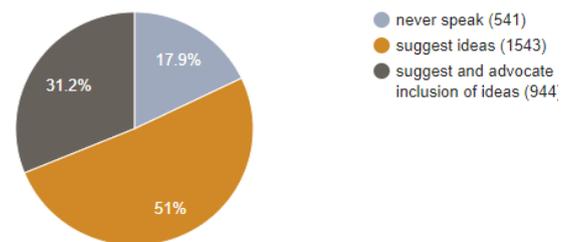
⁶ Data from 7 countries – 4 projects in 4 countries collected digital data with additional qualitative info interviewing 420 individuals.

water, electricity, etc. – 13'463 people received individual services and 5'087 did profit from group services. For more information about the HEKS/EPER engagement related to the war against Ukraine, please check the Fact-sheet 'War On Ukraine'.

The HKI '**own initiatives**' shows commitment and behavioural change and are thus an indicator of a project's possible sustainability, strengthening communities to act on their own rights. Data was gathered from 2 projects in 2 countries (Uganda, Congo) only. In the frame of these three projects, **161 activities** have been implemented and traced 36.6% were collective initiatives of groups. 42.9% were taken up independently (16% in 2021), while 40.4% were facilitated by HEKS/EPER (83% in 2021). 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.

Effective participation in decision-making bodies at the community level (HKI) has been measured in 18 projects in 8 countries.

- **Graph A** shows that **82.2%** (2021: 74%) of the community members **participate actively** and **51 %** (2021: 47%) suggest ideas or **31.2%** (2021: 27%) even advocate for implementing their ideas.
- Community members reported **moderate (42,5%) or high (20,7%) influence** in community bodies in which they participated. **36.8%** (2021: 45%) indicate that they have **no or a rather low influence**. Possibly due to Covid, 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 at all. With now raising again to 63.2% in 2022, there a positive trend in these 18 HEKS/EPER projects.



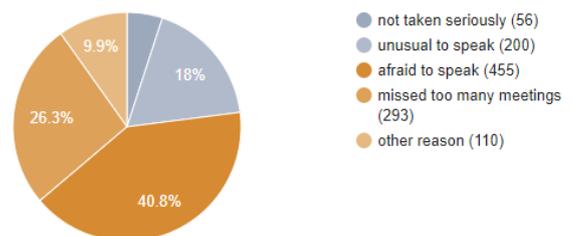
Graph A: How did, in 2022, project participants speak-out in their communities in processes of decision-making.

Almost **44.6% 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.

Discriminated people have less influence

Yet, analysing the data of the 36.8% of people on **reasons for 'no influence'** in-depth (see **Graph B**), HEKS/EPER notices a clear gap between mainstream society and discriminated groups.

- Of people saying for them it is '**unusual to speak**', 60% belong to discriminated groups.
- Of people who are '**afraid to speak**' at meetings, 69% are discriminated against.
- And, of those who '**missed too many meetings**', 53% are discriminated community members.



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

These data on group belonging of the project participants prove how important it is to empower community members to participate in decision-making structures and promote their capacities and scope to influence decisions.

Out of 3028 (2021: 1412) community members participating in different organisations, **54,7% or 1655 persons** (2021: 52% or 739 persons) report to participate in an **organisation that is relevant** to overarching or specific resource and topic communal decision-making. At the same time, other **36% or 1089 persons** (2021: 33% or 508 persons) engage in **advocacy or interest groups** and **9% or 284 persons** (2021: 11% or 165 persons) in **voluntary work or self-help groups** (284). **Women** constitute **60%** (2021: 70%) of these community members active in local organisations.

Moreover, HEKS/EPER facilitated in 2022 overall 90 **training workshops and learning/sensitisation events** in 7 countries, where 7000 people took part in 83 learning events that addressed the human-rights-based approach, conflict sensitivity, and conflict transformation topics, and 20 initiatives addressed gender equality topics. 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. And they have scale-up effects as they 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.

Inclusion through Church Cooperation activities

In the frame of **Church Cooperation**, HEKS/EPER enabled with 2.26 M CHF social work of Reformed Churches in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, reaching out to more than 30'000 people through 29 projects; most of them working towards the inclusion of vulnerable, refugees, IDPs, and often addressing children and young people.

In **Eastern Europe**, HEKS/EPER also works on social inclusion of marginalised groups through church cooperation (not funded by SDC) focusing on i) home care for the elderly and sick/handicapped in Romania, Ukraine and Serbia; ii) Roma inclusion in Hungary, Slovakia; iii) on migration/refugees in the Czech Republic, in Hungary, Slovakia and Serbia; iv) Humanitarian support in Ukraine.

In the **Middle East**, Church Cooperation's activities on social inclusion reached out to more than 10'000 people, including Syrian refugees in Lebanon or Syria, enabling almost 6'000 Muslim and Christian children and youth access to an afterschool education programme. The earthquake that hit Turkey and Northern Syria on 6th February 2023 has 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.



Community meeting in Haiti.

This is HEKS/EPER



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

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

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

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

In the frame of **Church Cooperation**, HEKS/EPER enabled with 2.26 M CHF social work of Reformed Churches in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, reaching out to more than 30'000 people through 29 projects.

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

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

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

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

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

Published by HEKS/EPER thematic advisory and MEAL units, May 2023, Zürich (Switzerland)

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