

HEKS/EPER thematic factsheet 2023



Sustainable Land & Natural Resources Governance

HEKS/EPER Global Cooperation's strategy, promising practices, achievements and perspectives on land and natural resources.

Zürich, June 2023

Why Land Rights and Sustainable Land Management Matter

Global Challenges – Context

The emerging food crisis, driven by climate change, energy crisis, war, and unsustainable production and consumption patterns, highlights the shortcomings of our food systems. Land tenure rights, which define the relationship between people and land, are at the heart of these systems. Secure access to land is crucial for sustainable food systems and contributes to increasing resilience to external shocks, including food crises.¹

Violence and conflict remain the main causes of acute hunger, and hunger and violence are expected to increase as the global economy deteriorates.² Systemic violence in food systems undermines the dignity and humanity of people, often through categories such as disability, race and gender, and restricts or denies people's access to the necessities of life. The global food system is based on a small number of industrially produced staple crops, a small number of countries producing these crops for export, and a small number of corporations dominating the agri-food market.³ Extractivism is a dominant relationship in global food systems where natural resources are extracted for economic growth, leading to human impoverishment, especially to the detriment of Indigenous peoples, rural communities, small-scale food producers/peasants, food and agriculture workers, and women. Extractivism is also the main driver of climate change and global and local inequalities. Extractivist projects undermine traditional and small-scale hunting, fishing, herding, and agriculture, limit biodiversity and depend on chemical inputs and high-energy processes. International economic law, particularly the World Trade Organization Agreement on Agriculture, has enabled extractivist global food systems, which favour transnational and industrial food production practices, impoverishing farming communities. Extractivism could only properly be understood concerning its colonial origins. Extractivist economies rely on structural inequality that oppresses people based on their interlaced identities, contributing to a dynamic of disempowerment.

Increasing disputes over land and natural resources is driven by the interests of powerful corporations, environmental pressures, climate change mitigation projects, demographic pressures and geopolitical dynamics. Although policies and guidelines might be in a place like the "Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests – VGGT", data about land deals in Africa tells us that 78% of all deals assessed show unsatisfactory levels of voluntary guideline uptake and implementation, and 20% do not comply with any of the VGGT principles⁴.

Good land governance, intact ecosystems, and profound knowledge of land and water usage efficiency and sustainability are crucial. Evidence suggests that indigenous peoples and local communities are often the most capable custodians of natural capital. Still, their rights are frequently disregarded in favour of development projects that displace them. It is essential to strengthen land, territorial, and natural resources rights to reduce poverty, inequality and conflict, advance gender equality, and preserve biodiversity and ecosystem services. Local communities with secure tenure rights are more resilient to external shocks and stresses and protect and restore landscapes contributing to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

To achieve this, participatory approaches are needed at the local, national, and international levels, making local communities, indigenous peoples, women, youth, smallholder farmers, and pastoralists central actors in efforts to achieve the 2030 agenda, transform our food systems, and build a sustainable future without hunger.

How HEKS/EPER responds – Strategy

Land and natural resource management involves rules, processes and structures that determine how land and resources are managed and how decisions about access and use are made. HEKS/EPER promotes the transformation of conflict to inclusive decision-making, transparency, responsibility and accountability for effective, equitable and sustainable natural resource management. The **rights-based approach** to work is at the heart of our

¹ March 2023, HRC fifty-second session, Conflict and the right to food Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri

² FAO and WFP, "Hunger hotspots: FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity – October 2022 to January 2023 Outlook", Rome, 2022.

³ March 2023, HRC fifty-second session, Conflict and the right to food Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri.

⁴ 2022, LandMatrix report : 'Little progress in practice' (<https://landmatrix.org/>)

work. The organisation supports inclusive land governance models and sustainable land use practices, focusing on territories and ecosystems' role in delivering basic services. In establishing equitable food systems, HEKS/EPER works with local people and communities as well as with state actors and the private sector to promote an enabling policy, legal and business environment.

One cornerstone of HEKS' engagement to contribute to its overarching global outcome 3 of sustainable land & resource governance is the yearly held '**Landforum**'. This event has brought experts and the interested broader public together around a specific subject since 2017.

The first Landforum in 2017 was entitled 'Traditionally sustainable' and focused on the benefits of local, traditional, and indigenous communities for inclusive governance of land and natural resources. In 2018 and again in 2021, the 'UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas – UNDROP' was highlighted, especially its importance worldwide and in Switzerland. The Landforum 2020 convened around the topic "Strengthening Governance and Land Tenure Rights as a Response to Climate Change". It showed, amongst others, the tight connection between climate change adaptation and the need for secure tenure rights. In 2022 HEKS decided to dedicate the Landforum to the topic '**Territorial Markets and Agroecology**' and organised it with the 'Agroecology Fund' and the 'Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa – AFSA'. Around 90 participants from 20 countries discussed the benefits, challenges and opportunities of linking agroecological production with place-based markets and food systems.

More info on 'Landforum 2022': see Factsheet 2023 on 'Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems'.



HEKS/EPER core demands promoting sustainable governance of land and natural resources

Promote the Right to Land

HEKS/EPER requests that the right of every person or community to access, use and manage land and resources are respected, protected and fulfilled. Land is the basis for the fulfilment of the right to food, the way of living and the cultural identity of local communities.

Enable Common Land Use

HEKS/EPER is convinced that community-organised management forms lead to sustainable use and conservation of finite resources and public assets such as land, water, forests and biodiversity. HEKS/EPER focuses on, promotes and legally protects this economic and living form of the traditional 'common land'.

Protect Land activists

HEKS/EPER ensures that human rights defenders committed to implementing land, territorial and environmental rights are supported in their work and better protected against discrimination and violence.

Promising Practices Worldwide

Niger – Securing mobility and access to resources for pastoralists

The project ZAMAN TARE POTAL (Zaman Tare = cohabitation in Hausa language, Potal = peace in Fulani language) or ZAMTAPO: It is a project to **secure the mobility of herds in Niger**. The project initially started its activities in 2011 in the region of Maradi, which lasted until 2018. Since 2019 the activities shifted to the region of Zinder, where the project is now running in its second phase. In 2021, another project also started in the region of Diffa. The intervention on pastoral land is part of territorial planning. It requires close collaboration of civil society actors representing pastoralists as well as sedentary farmers with different government bodies responsible for implementing the Rural Code. Thus, specific committees negotiated **about using and managing land**



Fences on both sides demark the land corridors for cattle of pastoralists in Niger.

and other natural resources. The committees' composition, the collegiality of their decision, and their super-structure from the bottom up increase the sustainability of their actions. For this reason, they are essential in Niger for securing access to and managing pastoral land and resources.

With the ZAMTAPO project, HEKS/EPER has facilitated the formation of various commissions and supports them in negotiating and recognising **land rights for pastoralists and settled peasants**. A vital instrument to reconcile the potential conflict between sedentary farmers and pastoralists is the clear demarcation of corridors for pastoralists and their herds. The commissions are responsible for conducting the negotiations between all parties concerned, monitoring compliance with agreed rules and acting as a mediator in the case of conflict. The process of demarcation of the corridors has three different phases with twelve distinct steps, where each stage involves different responsible and associated actors.

Between 2011 and 2022, the following results were achieved in the region of Maradi and Zinder.

- 1 816 km (1 553 km in Maradi + 263 km in Zinder) of transhumance corridors demarcated.
- Rehabilitation and regeneration of 885 ha of commonly used grazing land (585 ha + 300 ha in Maradi and Zinder, respectively)
- Installation of 55 wells for pastoralists and sedentary farmers alike, of which 41 are newly constructed and 14 rehabilitated, including the appointment of well-functioning management committees.
- The project supported the creation of a pastoralists movement (Tribune Pastoral) that advocated for the signature of a bilateral agreement between the Maradi region in Niger and the state of Katsina in Nigeria in July 2017 on the organisation and management of cross-border transhumance between the two regions.
- Another success of the Tribune Pastoral was the denunciation and subsequent prevention of a land-grabbing case in the pastoral zone of Bermo of nearly 91,000 ha; Because, in reality, it was indeed an attempt to grab land in the middle of a pastoral area for private purposes and thus excluding other users.
- 605 km of live hedges planted by the communities to ensure that the boundaries of the transhumance corridors are respected.
- 206 local land commissions (COFOB) have been set up and trained.
- 24 training workshops for the land commissions conducted to enable the commissions to play their role as administrators for land transactions, conducting mediation in case of land conflicts.

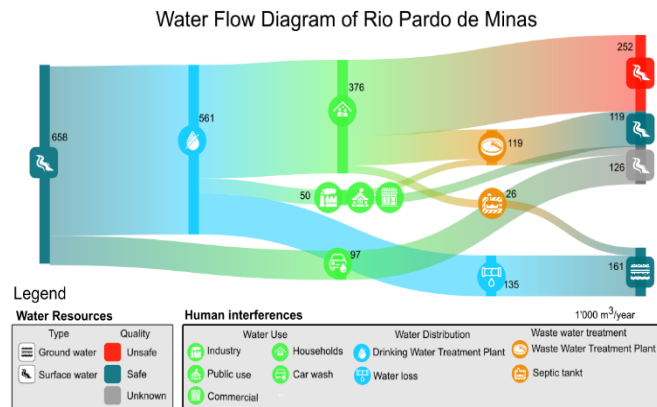
Brazil – a simple tool to strengthen participatory governance of water resources

HEKS developed since 2020 a tool called the Water Flow Diagram (WFD) in collaboration with other organisations, mainly the EAWAG (aquatic research institute of the Technical University of Zürich – ETH) and the Swiss Development Agency – SDC. One of the first applications of this tool was made in Rio Pardo de Minas, Brazil. The WFD is a simple yet effective and intuitive tool that allows the easy visualisation of a community or city's water supply and use situation.

In 2022, apart from reviewing and updating the WFD for the City of Rio Pardo, an innovative experiment was applied in the rural community of Sobrado in the municipality of Rio Pardo de Minas. This experiment helped to incorporate new dimensions into the WFD tool, such as integrating rural and urban areas, groundwater stocks, and land cover of the territory in question.

The WFD was presented at various international events, including the World Water Week in Stockholm in 2021 and the World Water Forum in Dakar in 2022. Due to the tool's good reception and positive evaluation, the WFD was also presented at the United Nations World Water Conference in March 2023 in New York, in a side event organised by the Swiss Water Partnership

In conclusion, the WFD is an excellent tool for scientifically sound methods to help political participation on the community or municipality level. It allows the simple visualisation of the specific water flows in a community or city and fosters the involvement of both experts and citizens in the decision-making process about water resources. The tool served to drive the development of an Action Plan to solve the water supply problems of the City of Rio Pardo.



Development and ramifications of the Water Flow Diagram in the city of Rio Pardo de Minas, Brazil, and in the rural community of Sobrado

Brazil – governance of territories and natural resources through traditional communities

The governance of territories and natural resources by indigenous and other traditional peoples and communities is central to HEKS/EPER interventions in Brazil.

Brazil has estimated 4.5 million traditional communities⁵, occupying roughly 25% of the national territory⁶.

HEKS/EPER operates in the federal state of Minas Gerais with at least 7 different traditional communities. Here we highlight the work with two distinct categories: firstly, with the flower pickers in Serra do Espinhaço, in Alto Jequitinhonha, and secondly, with the communities of Vazanteiros in the region of the São Francisco river. Both rural communities play an essential role as **custodians** of the enormous **biodiversity** and **water resources** of the fragile ecosystem known as Cerrado.

Traditional communities



Traditional communities are culturally differentiated groups that recognize themselves as such, that have their forms of social organization, that occupy and use territories and natural resources as a condition for their cultural, social, religious, ancestral, and economic reproduction, using traditional knowledge, innovations, and practices generated and transmitted by tradition⁷.

The flower-picking communities are characterised by highly diversified food production, particularly around their homesteads, and a collectively organised management system of the natural resources of their ancestral territories (non-timber forest products). The most important activities are gathering wild fruits and medicinal plants of the Cerrado ecosystem, collecting more than ten different raw materials from the region's upper parts, and collecting dry wildflowers and grasses in the upper parts of the region. HEKS/EPER

supports the flower picker community through the *Commission for the Defence of the Rights of the Flower Picking Communities* (CODECEX), a regional movement of local communities that integrates more than 50 local

⁵ <http://www.ecobrasil.eco.br/30-restrito/categoria-conceitos/976-comunidades-ou-populacoes-tradicionalis>

⁶ Brazilian Environment Ministry: <https://antigo.mma.gov.br/biomas/amaz%C3%B4nia.html>

organisations to claim their right to land and develop sustainable land-use strategies. In this regard, in March 2020, the specific agricultural system was officially recognised as a **Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS)**, granted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).



Brazil: The use of the biodiversity, such as the traditional Pequi fruit, is a cornerstone for the sustainable management of their territories.

The Vazanteiro community (literally translated into 'peoples of the waters and growing lands') are characterised by their highly diversified livelihoods, ranging from fisheries and gathering to agricultural production and gardening. One of the main actors is the *Mixed Cooperative of Family Farmers, Extractivists and Fisher (CoopCerrado)*. In 2021 CoopCerrado was awarded the **'Equator Prize' from the United Nations Development Programme.**⁷

CoopCerrado works with smallholders in a 'farmer-to-farmer' approach to sustainably harvest and process Cerrado's fruits, plants and seeds, commercialising dozens of certified organic products with creative marketing, elevating both the prestige of Cerrado products and local livelihoods for 26,000 people. Community monitoring prevents overharvesting, while restoration activities improve degraded ecosystems. The network managed an area of 124,000 hectares for sustainable use and created two sustainable-use reserves. The success of the initiative in protecting biodiversity, addressing the climate crisis, and improving local livelihoods has led to its replication in five Brazilian states, showing the impact of community-based management and collective marketing.

Land and resource governance program in Cambodia

Cambodia's land rights and resource access have caused serious conflicts since the 1990s. The government's large-scale Economic Land Concessions have led to displacement, eviction of farmers, deforestation, and environmental degradation. Despite efforts by the government to provide individual land titling initiatives for smallholder farmers and the creation of Social Land Concessions, the effects for many peasant communities remain devastating. Concerns exist over recognising collective rights for indigenous communities to land and natural resources. The government's inconsistent approach has prevented these groups from playing a key role in sustainable land and resource management. The different speeds of registering land individually or collectively, without protection for collective claims, have created problems. Individual titling has favoured land markets and driven land speculation, leaving vulnerable communities behind. The current process for collective titling is lengthy and bureaucratic, preventing indigenous from being able to register their collective land efficiently.

The Land and Resource Governance Program of HEKS/EPER Cambodia aims to improve secure land tenure and sustainable management of natural resources by small farmers in the provinces of Pursat and Kampong Chnang, as well as indigenous groups in Mondulhiri. On the one hand, the programme seeks to hold duty-bearers more accountable and strengthen the rights of disadvantaged groups in accessing land and resources. On the other hand, it is important to empower vulnerable groups to assert their rights, especially in obtaining collective land rights. This requires creating mechanisms to effectively resolve land and resource conflicts and improving relationships between civil society and local/regional government representatives.



Cambodia: Indigenous communities are participating directly in the process to demarcate their land.

Through the training of community mobilisers, people in villages were made aware of their rights and could bring their concerns to alternative conflict resolution mechanisms. Of the 275 raised cases, 176 were

⁷ <https://www.equatorinitiative.org/2021/07/11/coopcerrado-cooperativa-mista-de-agricultores-familiares-extrativistas-pescadores-vazanteiros-assentados-e-guias-turisticos-do-cerrado/>

solved and satisfied with resolving their conflicts. By receiving land title certificates, communities used their claims to improve their agricultural production, livestock, housing, and land security. Our partners SK and BCV institutionalised a working group at the provincial level where government representatives and civil society discuss sensitive cases that cannot be resolved locally. Respected social and political leaders are often involved, and solutions can only be achieved through higher-level interventions. Our partners, SK and BCV, filed eight official collective claims that benefited 1,876 people (1,218 women). 36 cases were resolved at the provincial level among the 55 raised cases in 2022. HEKS and SK are also working to improve the government's service offerings in land governance. A government-introduced system investigates the satisfaction and influence of health measures in collaboration with civil society. HEKS is now trying to transfer this system to land rights. The pilot project for this was just evaluated and yielded good results.

The most challenging aspect of the work is promoting collective land rights. By 2022, only 38 indigenous communities (equal to 981 titles/plots of 39'342.41 hectares for 3'717 households) for collective land rights will have been granted in the past 20 years, and the number continues to decline. In 2022, there were only five communal land titles. Our partner CLEC currently supports two indigenous communities (Anhchor and Chiklorb) to navigate the difficult process involving three different ministries applying for collective land rights. By December 2022, one indigenous community had completed the public display of land boundary data to review the preliminary map and resolve any conflicts. Another community has completed the preliminary mapping and awaits public announcement in early 2023. The project will continue to support dialogue sessions with the provincial committee for state land administration to review the allocation of communal land titles (CLT) and investigate where a subdivision/reclassification can be requested in 2023.

To ensure that the land is used visibly and not immediately taken over by others during the long wait for the collective title, HEKS emphasises supporting indigenous communities' use of land and forestry. The literature shows indigenous communities are guardians of forests and landscapes with their natural resources and contribute to climate change mitigation. Unfortunately, many communities already have so much land taken from them that they can no longer carry out their farming methods. That's why HEKS conducted a study and a peer-to-peer exchange to test how traditional and newer methods can be best combined to manage land adapted to new conditions sustainably. The peer-to-peer exchange between indigenous communities was very motivating and will continue in 2023.

UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas

On 17 December 2018, the international community adopted the 'Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas' (UNDROP). Twenty-eight articles describe the essential rights that peasants worldwide are entitled to. These include the right to land, including collective land rights, the right to water, seeds, and agroecological forms of production, based on an intact environment or the right to determine one's own economic goals and nutritional patterns.

The declaration outlines states' responsibilities to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, who have historically been discriminated against. Switzerland has advocated for the adoption of the UNDROP during the negotiations and, with its approval in New York, sent a clear and praiseworthy signal. The concrete implementation of the UNDROP will also present challenges within Switzerland when bringing Swiss agricultural or trade policy in line with the UNDROP. For example, regarding bilateral trade agreements or laws on intellectual property rights. HEKS/EPER has joined forces with a broad alliance of civil society organisations, the **'Friends of the Declaration'** (FOD), in Switzerland and internationally to promote the implementation of the declaration in the North and the South. The alliance aims to enter into a dialogue with the Swiss administration to follow up on its commitments towards the UNDROP.

UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas

The UNDROP builds on, and includes agreed language taken from a number of binding international treaties. States must therefore play a key role in its implementation, in line with the numerous UNDROP provisions defining their obligations.

The Declaration encompasses all the important rights of HEKS/EPER's core constituencies to overcome systematic discrimination. Therefore, HEKS/EPER will continue to enhance the implementation of the UNDROP in future. HEKS/EPER will support peasants around the globe to meaningfully claim and enjoy their rights.

HEKS/EPER was following up on the recommendations of a joint study which analysed the need for action towards implementing the declaration. The study⁸ has been discussed with civil society and Swiss government representatives at the 2021 HEKS Land Forum⁹. HEKS/EPER, in collaboration with like-minded organisations such as the FOD in Switzerland and other allies globally, made some progress towards promoting and protecting the rights of peasants. Here are some of the highlights:

Study on the Impact of EFTA-Indonesia Free Trade Agreement on UNDROP: HEKS/EPER and FOD collaborated with Caroline Dommen, a consultant, to prepare a study on the impact of the EFTA-Indonesia Free Trade Agreement on the rights of peasants and other people in the rural area. The study found that the FTA's strict intellectual property (IP) provision may reduce biodiversity, negatively affect the environment, and restrict farmers' ability to save, use, exchange, and sell seeds. The study was submitted to the EFTA-Indonesia's first joint committee meeting held in Jakarta on the 7th of December.

Letters and Reports to Support the Implementation of UNDROP: The FOD submitted letters and reports to the Swiss government and other like-minded governments to support the implementation of the UNDROP. The letters and reports urged governments to support the setting up a monitoring and follow-up mechanism for UNDROP at the UN Human Rights Council (UN HRC).



Reports to the Pre-Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Plenary Sessions of the UN HRC: The FOD submitted two reports to the pre-UPR plenary sessions of the UN, highlighting the steps that Switzerland should take to implement the UNDROP domestically as well as in its foreign relations. Three countries

took various recommendations from the two reports and expressed them at the 42nd UPR, where Switzerland was being examined.

Completion and Launch of the UNDROP Website: HEKS/EPER supported the completion and launch of the UNDROP website, called "Defending Peasants' Rights." The website seeks to educate peasants about the UNDROP and its history and highlight their struggles for its implementation in various countries. The website was translated into various languages to reach a wider audience.



Industrial wood production in Brazil destroys valuable farmland and the local ecosystem.

⁸ Study: <https://www.heks.ch/sites/default/files/documents/2020-08/Die%20Schweizer%20Aussenpolitik.pdf>

⁹ Documentation HEKS Land Forum 21 <https://www.heks.ch/putting-peasants-rights-practice>,

Achievements & Perspectives

The pandemic, followed by the war in Ukraine, all under the shadow of climate change, has once again highlighted how poorly our food systems function and how damaging they are to the planet. The search for land for CO₂ compensation projects only adds to the pressure on land. We need a stronger focus on small-scale agriculture and agroecology in small, preferably regional, food systems. The knowledge of local forces and indigenous groups for sustainable and resource-saving land use can also help us, and the centrepiece of these perspectives is secure access to land. It is a new awareness. Many farmers have turned to old traditions in times of need and are growing for their needs and the community. The paths are defined, but political will must still consistently follow.

Achievements over the past years

Global results

Number of people benefitting from secured land rights in 2022: **20'013**.

Total **hectares** covered by new land rights in 2022: **91'562**.

From **2009 to 2022**, land projects improved land access for about **712'500 individuals**.

In 2022, the trend of projects taking up the issue of 'access to land' is kept on and systematically included in their strategies. Accordingly, 13 projects focus on access to land in 7 countries and address 85'000 project participants.

Achievements 2022

71 out of 238 projects did work towards HEKS/EPER international programme's Outcome 3 of sustainable land and resource governance – 21 projects in 10 countries with a specific focus on land rights. Together with its partners, **HEKS/EPER facilitated in 2022 access to 91'562 hectares of land for 20'013 individuals** (2021: 89'022 ha for 85'492 people) covered by different access rights. Almost all, 99.7% or 91'327 ha (2021: 98%) of this area is covered by collective and only 0.3% or 235 ha (2021: 2%) by individual land rights.

81% of addressed people are affiliated with the groups discriminated by ethnic, indigenous, linguistic, occupational, social or socio-economic factors.

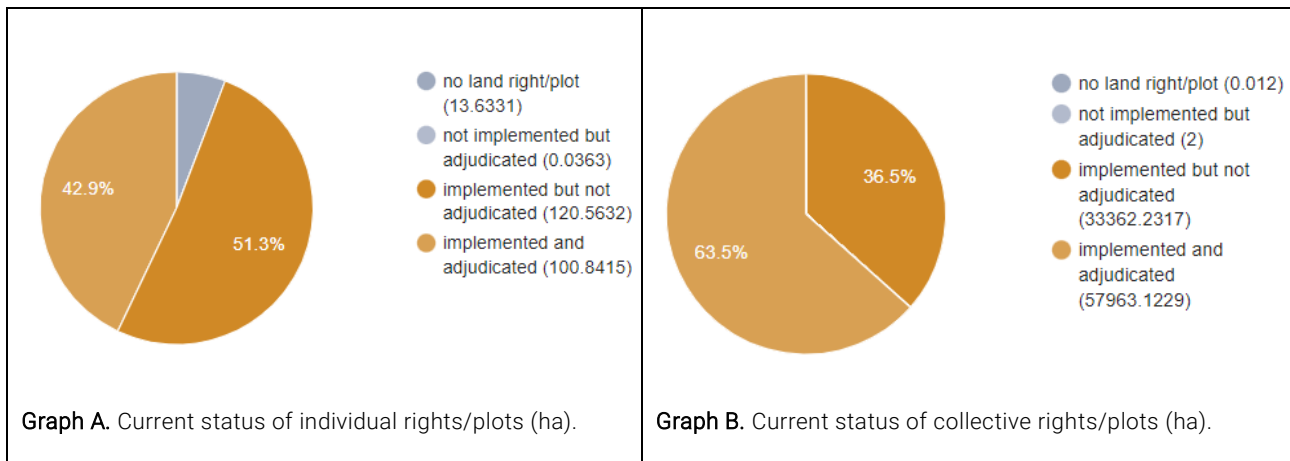
99.7% of all ha of land HEKS/EPER facilitates access are **collective land rights (87'151 ha)**, yet they form only 49% of the plots. The other 51% of the individual plots compromise only 0.3% of the land. This observation aligns with HEKS/EPER's ambition to focus on collective land rights. In countries where collective land rights are legally recognised, it is, under certain circumstances, possible to obtain larger plots of land both full legal recognition and practical access, for rural communities. But the struggle to get legally recognised access to land is often an arduous and lengthy process, and competition over land, especially through large-scale land deals, is rising.

326 individuals profited from individual land rights, of which 121 are women and 19'687 from collective land rights – of which a slight majority, 10'636 are women, that can be rated as a success to support women in rural areas to exercise and secure their rights to land

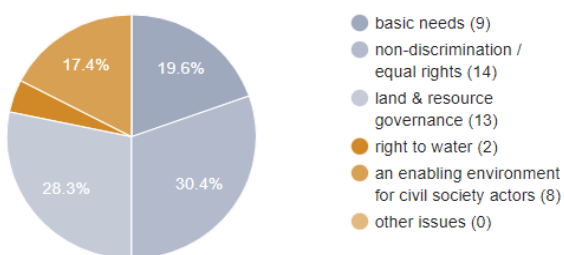
So, individual land rights have a low outreach to people and hectares. When we look at **individual land plots (Graph A)**, 43% (101 ha) of the analysed area is implemented and adjudicated. The individual land plots are mainly used for agricultural purposes (75%), cattle (17%) and shelter (26%).



Discussing access rights – Senegal.



64% (57'963 ha) of land area with **collective rights (Graph B)** is implemented and adjudicated. 36.5% (33'362 ha) of land area with collective rights is implemented but not adjudicated, meaning the land is utilised collectively in practice. It can be secured for many people even without the right to the land being assigned officially by a legal authority. Overall, the result demonstrates a high degree of effectiveness of land projects to ensure de facto access to and securitisation of land. Processes to ensure legal (adjudicated) land rights need distinctive follow-up by the people claiming their land rights and steady efforts of HEKS/EPER supporting these people over the years. 100% of the analysed collective land area is likewise used for agricultural, forestry, cattle and shelter purposes.



28% of all claims in HEKS/EPER projects are related to land and resource governance.

In 2022, **46 group claims** were submitted in different HEKS/EPER projects. 4 countries (see graph left) enabled **13 group claims related to land & resource governance** (28% of all claims), out of which duty-bearers already accept 12 claims (92%) and have a legally binding character.

In total, **15'874 people in 1445 communities** benefitted in 2022 from group land and resources claims.

Despite the difficulties and complexity of addressing land rights issues in many contexts where HEKS/EPER works, substantial progress could be achieved during 2022, and

the access to land – individually or collectively – could increase. A very nice example of the effectiveness of protecting the land right de facto is the Cerrado project in Brazil – see also this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_93BShWuvrk.

Perspectives

Land and natural resources governance has been one of the core topics of the HEKS/EPER programme for many years. It remained high on the agenda also within the HEKS/EPER International Programme 2021-24, and it is outlined as one of the 4 outcomes of the new strategy 2025-2028 (named as 'right to land & food' besides 'climate justice', 'inclusion' and 'refuge & migration').

The pandemic and the ongoing Ukraine conflict with its severe consequences show the fragility of people's access to essential resources and the disbalancing of food systems – with growing inequalities and inequities leading to more hunger, malnutrition, and extreme poverty in many countries HEKS/EPER works in. A general shift towards diversified agroecological production and resilient food systems is urgent. Thus, for HEKS/EPER, securing land, territorial and natural resources rights remain crucial to respond to the mid-and long-term effects of the poly crises, eliminate poverty and strengthen people's food sovereignty. One of the challenges to be addressed in many countries is the overlap and the inconsistencies between (modern) legal and customary rights, where the question and friction between individual vs collective land rights are just one of the elements.

Based on this, HEKS/EPER will continue advocating for the fulfilment of land and tenure rights. It will also explicitly link its work related to the governance of land and natural resources to overarching legal frameworks. We will continue our systematic effort to use legal power at the national and/or international level such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its Nagoya Protocol, The UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, the ILO Convention 169, and the FAO Tenure Guidelines. HEKS/EPER will continue its **territorial approach** combined with **advocacy and casework** on the governance of land and resources, focusing on the following:

- Support territorial market system initiatives that develop locally promising, place-based value chains and market services that derive from sustainably managed forests, pastures, savannas, or marine ecosystems, wherever possible, community-driven, as a follow-up of the Landforum 2022.
- Strengthen rights and governance capacities of local communities on natural resources (seeds, biodiversity, water) through the development of Community Protocols (Biological and/or FPIC).
- Support initiatives that value traditional, local agricultural food systems preserving territories, e.g., in the context of FAO's Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems initiative.
- Introducing ICT solutions supporting small-scale farmers and producers, particularly in agroecological production, land governance and territorial markets.
- Community of Practice on land and climate change, fostering linkages between land rights and land governance, ecosystem services, and nature-based solutions, highlighting indigenous and local communities' important role as custodians of natural resources.
- Further develop the existing and create new synergies between advocacy and project work, e.g. regarding land grabbing.
- UNDROP in selected countries: Activities focus on capacity building and awareness raising to support the policy work of HEKS/EPER's partners. In Switzerland, HEKS/EPER re-enforces its cooperation with the Friends of the Declaration NGO group, also to follow up on the results of the Landforum from December 2021
- HEKS/EPER and its partners further support the international struggles of the Guaraní Kaiowá people to secure their ancestral territories. This case is currently pending in the Interamerican Human Rights Commission in Washington.

The year 2022 will be marked by elaborating the new HEKS/EPER strategy 2025-28. From the participants at the internal workshop on land and resource governance, the following key points were formulated:

- Strengthen agroecology and short food chains as a means to foster food sovereignty, secure the access to water and other resources and increase resilience to climate change effects
- Secure the enabling environment for civil society organisations and protect human rights defenders
- Increase the internal capacity for biodiversity, ecology and decentralisation

Other HEKS/EPER publications related to 'inclusive markets'

- Friends of the UNDROP (2020): Research brief: Die Schweizer Aussenpolitik und die Erklärung der Vereinten Nationen über die Rechte der Kleinbauern und -bäuerinnen: <https://www.heks.ch/sites/default/files/documents/2020-08/Die%20Schweizer%20Aussenpolitik.pdf>
- HEKS/EPER (2019). Securing the mobility of pastoralists. The ZAMTAPO project in Niger – Capitalisation of HEKS/EPER experiences. Working Paper N°4, 04/2019, Zurich, April 2019.
- HEKS/EPER (2018). Access to Land Annual Report 2017. Report on Swiss Church Aid's activities, impact and perspectives related to access to land. April 2018.
- HEKS/EPER (2017). Access to Land in the Philippines. Capitalisation of HEKS/EPER Experiences. Working Paper N°3, 07/2017, Zurich, July 2017.
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- HEKS/EPER (2015). Assess & Enhance Land Tenure Security, HEKS/EPER Analytical Framework. Working Paper N° 2, 02/2015, Zurich, February 2015.
- HEKS/EPER (2012). Access to land – laying the groundwork for development, Working Paper N° 1, 12/2012. Zurich, December 2012.

This is HEKS/EPER



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

In 2022, HEKS/EPER supported more than 60 projects in Switzerland, the inclusion of 98'000 people, 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. 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

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