

HEKS/EPER Thematic Factsheet 2021



Humanitarian Aid

HEKS/EPER's humanitarian aid strategy and achievements.

Zürich/Lausanne, May 2021

Why Humanitarian Aid Matters

Global challenges¹

The world is in a grave state of humanitarian crisis. The **number of people in need increased** from 90 million in 2015 to 170 million people in early 2020. The **COVID-19 pandemic** pushed the UN forecast to a record high of 235 million people in 2021. During the last decade, the **main driver behind this trend was conflicts** that often lead to protracted crises that disrupted life in peace for decades and do not allow people to cover their basic needs and positively transform their societies. Some examples include Syria with 6 million internally displaced, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with conflicts in the region of the great lakes, South Sudan where 2.2 million people have been displaced to neighbouring countries, and the massive displacement of Rohingya from Myanmar to Bangladesh. Globally, there are an estimated 51 million new and existing IDPs, and the number of refugees has doubled to 20 million. People suffering from hunger increased, with conflict being the primary driver of acute hunger for 77 million people in 22 countries. The number of acute food insecure people was estimated at 270 million at the end of 2020. In many contexts, COVID-19 added another layer of complexity. E.g., in Lebanon, shaken by an economic and political crisis and the Beirut Blast, a required heavy lockdown strongly contributed to a large part of the population becoming dependent on aid. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how vulnerable the world is to a truly global catastrophe. But another catastrophe has been building for many decades: the impacts of global warming are already killing people and devastating lives and livelihoods every year, and they will only get worse without immediate, determined action. The frequency and intensity of climatological disaster are increasing (35% since the 1990s), with more category 4 and 5 storms, more heatwaves breaking temperature records and more heavy rains, among many other extremes. Loss of natural resources, food insecurity, direct and indirect health impacts and displacement are likewise on the rise. In the past ten years, 83% of all disasters triggered by natural hazards were caused by extreme weather- and climate-related events killing more than 400'000 people since 2010.

How HEKS/EPER responds

The provision of humanitarian aid worldwide is one of the mandates HEKS/EPER given by the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches (EKS). HEKS/EPER has carried it out over the past decades in many small- and large-scale emergencies worldwide and renewed it in the new HEKS/EPER International Programme. The humanitarian aid is anchored in the HEKS/EPER International Programme (2021-2024) global results framework as outcome 1, '**Basic needs during crisis are covered**'. The outcome aims to be achieved by two outputs addressing different phases after a crisis.

Outcome 1: Basic needs during crises are covered
Output 1.1: Means for basic needs are provided
Output 1.2: Livelihoods and infrastructure are restored

Outcome & outputs related directly to humanitarian aid of the HEKS/EPER International Programme 2021-2024.

HEKS/EPER's strategy output 1.1 'Means for basic needs are provided': HEKS/EPER responds to conflicts, disasters, and protracted crises and encompasses interventions to cover basic survival needs of affected population groups in a timely and professional manner according to Sphere standards. HEKS/EPER works through international alliances, direct implementation or local partners, whose capacity are actively enhanced. Where external conditions allow (e.g., functioning banking system and competitive markets), cash-based approaches are the preferred implementation methods as they allow recipients greater flexibility and dignity. In most crises, the host communities have been just as severely affected as the refugees or IDPs. Thus, HEKS/EPER addresses the needs of host and displaced communities and acts in a conflict-sensitive manner. Irrespective of the nature of life-saving interventions, emphasis is put on linking these with the subsequent phases of rehabilitation, livelihood recovery, and development, focusing on increasing the affected population's resilience to future threats. People in hard-to-reach areas are often even more affected by a crisis than those in more easily accessible locations. However, support by humanitarian actors is predominantly provided in areas where organisations can easily and safely operate. In the past, in humanitarian aid and development settings, HEKS/EPER committed itself to **serve the most vulnerable**. To continue to do so, and with more and more people being affected by conflicts, HEKS/EPER works in more complex and risky environments.

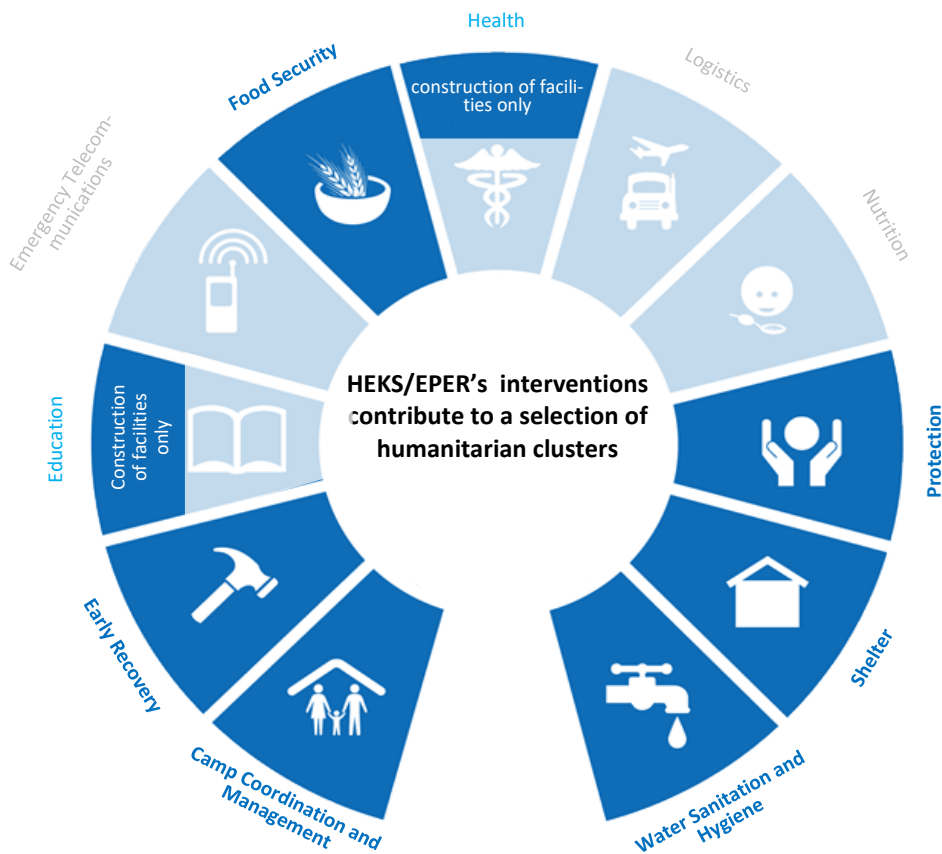
¹ Based on figures of OCHA: Global Humanitarian Overview 2021; and of I IFRC (2021). World Disasters Report 2020

HEKS/EPER’s strategy output 1.2 ‘Livelihoods and infrastructure are restored’: Disasters often result in massive destruction of private and public infrastructure and means of livelihoods. Communities and local authorities are usually not resilient enough to anticipate and independently recover. Therefore, **HEKS/EPER continues implementation beyond relief**. During the rehabilitation phase, the livelihoods of the most affected and most vulnerable groups are enhanced, and private houses and public infrastructure are reconstructed. Committed to the human rights-based Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), HEKS/EPER applies principles like participation, empowerment, accountability, equality, and non-discrimination.

In all reconstruction projects, HEKS/EPER emphasises **‘building back better’**, ensuring that the rehabilitated infrastructure can withstand a future disaster. Preference is given to locally available and environmental-friendly construction materials and traditional construction technologies, which will be improved where required. Ownership of households is increased by applying owner-driven approaches and flexible construction designs, coupled with technical support and capacity building to ensure high-quality buildings.

Contribution to the coordinated approach: HEKS / EPER closely coordinates all its humanitarian interventions with respective governments, local authorities, and humanitarian coordination bodies.

With its projects, HEKS/EPER primarily contributes to the food security, protection, shelter, WASH, camp coordination and management, and early recovery clusters, and actively takes part in the co-



HEKS/EPER is active in eight out of eleven humanitarian clusters.

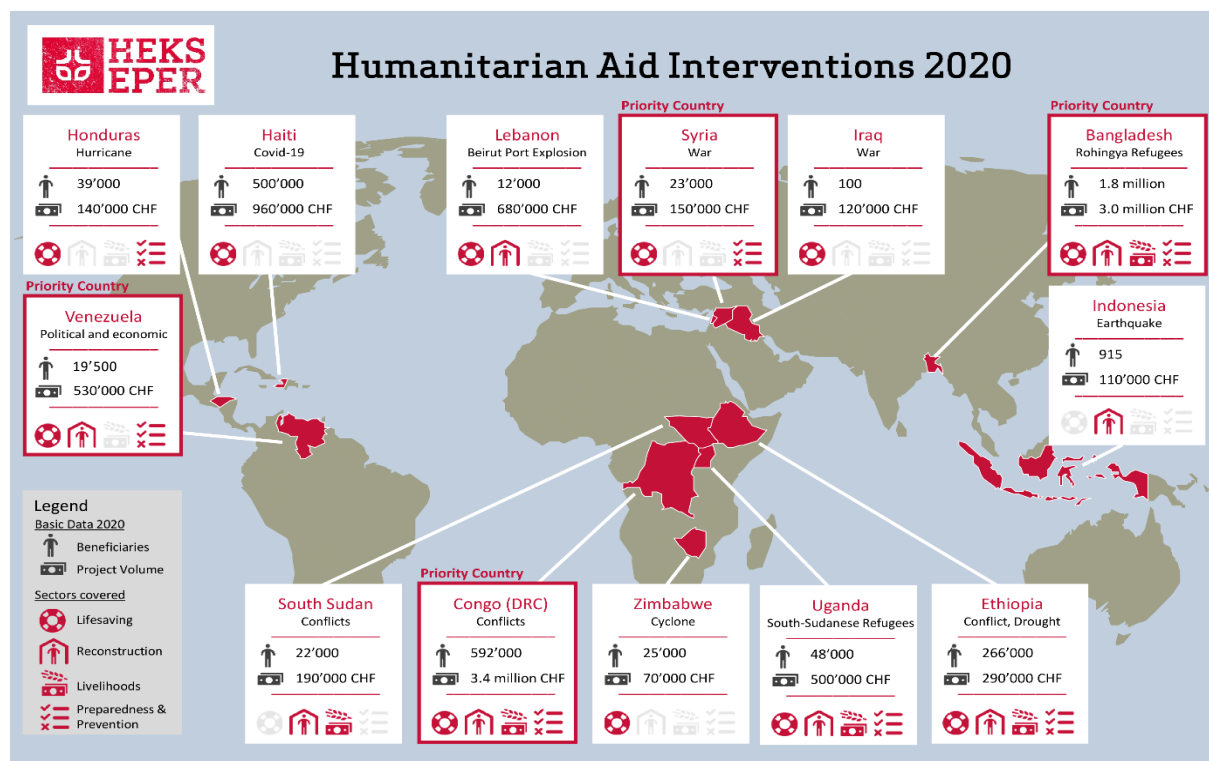
ordination mechanisms. HEKS / EPER provides partial support to health and education sector by constructing schools and health facilities while leaving service provision and capacity building to specialised agencies.

Crosscutting issues and quality insurance: In all humanitarian aid projects, HEKS / EPER commits to the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) on Quality and Accountability and aligns its interventions with the Sphere Standards. Projects comply with national law and consider respective donor standards.

Before any humanitarian aid intervention, HEKS/EPER conducts a needs assessment and analyses the working area’s power dynamics. The projects are planned and implemented in a **conflict-sensitive** manner. By consulting the affected people already in project planning, understanding and addressing their concerns through complaint mechanisms and implementing post-distribution monitoring or equivalent evaluation tools, HEKS/EPER is mainstreaming **accountability**. HEKS/EPER exclusively provides **needs-based humanitarian aid** and never makes religious affiliation a criterion in beneficiary selection. The principle of non-discrimination will also be followed for other characteristics, including age, gender, colour, ethnicity, sexual orientation, language, disability, health status, political or different opinions, and national or social origin.

Geographic Approach

HEKS/EPER responds to humanitarian crises, where HEKS/EPER is already present with a development cooperation office and in additional countries, if needs on the ground justify doing so and if the national government and civil society do not have the capacity to assist crisis-affected populations.



Transitional Shelter Assistance



The Bangladesh government allows Rohingya to construct shelters only from temporary materials and underlining its objective to repatriate the refugees. HEKS/EPER commits to enable quality shelter. It trains households and provides construction material to do essential constructions and repairs.

As per early 2021, priority areas are the following:

In **Bangladesh**, more than one million Rohingya displaced from Myanmar stay in refugee camps. Both the Rohingya, but also the host community require humanitarian support. With Bangladesh insisting on repatriation of Rohingya to Myanmar and Myanmar not providing required safety and rights to the Rohingya, the refugees will likely stay several more years in the camps and remain dependent on support.

The Rohingya Response is one of HEKS/EPER's most significant international programmes. With **24'000 households supported to repair and upgrade their shelters regularly**, HEKS/EPER manages the most extensive caseload of all NGOs in the Rohingya response. Vegetable gardening on the shelter's roofs is promoted, which improves nutrition and reduces the heat in the shelters. Settlement interventions (drainage, pathways, stairways, bridges, slope protection) improve safety in the camps, especially during the

monsoon season. During COVID-19, HEKS/EPER focuses on improving hygiene and infection control in all 400 health facilities in all camps and the host community by training health staff and constructing hygiene infrastructure. COVID-19 prevention messages are also strongly promoted in radio programmes produced and broadcasted by HEKS/EPER in the camps and the host community. Interventions in Bangladesh were supported by IOM, SDC, WHO, and Fondation Hironnelle.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo: Over decades, the Eastern Congo has been destabilised by conflicts in the great lakes region, primarily due to global economic interests related to the exploitation of natural resources. Outbreaks of Ebola, Cholera and Measles from 2018 to 2021 and climate-related shocks add additional layers of complexity and vulnerability. In the whole country, more than 5 million people are internally displaced and almost 16 million are food insecure. The needs in the DRC exceed the capacities of the international community, which has led to organisations mostly implementing projects in easily accessible and safe areas, leaving those most heavily affected in the hard-to-reach zones behind.

In 2019, HEKS/EPER adjusted its strategy in the DRC to **provide support to those living in hard-to-reach areas**. HEKS/EPER expanded its presence in DRC and since 2020 – in addition to its ‘development cooperation’ office– **also runs a ‘humanitarian aid’ office based in Goma**. This office manages new large-scale emergency interventions in hard-to-reach areas of North Kivu. Being on the ground with experienced expatriates who know the conflict and the actors allows HEKS/EPER to roll out need-based aid actions in conflict-affected zones. ECHO, OFDA and SDC currently support the programme. In the DRC, HEKS/EPER cooperates with DCA (Dan Church Aid) and further increases its collaboration with ACT Alliance Network members. In 2020, the HA volume invested in DRC increased up to CHF 4.4 M.

Cash for Work to improve infrastructure



The construction of roads improves the accessibility of hard-to-reach areas and provides income to the local communities.

Syria: The war in Syria is entering its 10th year, and still, over 11.1 million people need humanitarian assistance. 5.6 million people have fled their homes, the vast majority to neighbouring countries, and over 1.8 million population movements inside Syria. The people have insufficient access to food, shelter, water and health services. The sectors of health, WASH, protection and food have the highest number of people in need of assistance. 7.9 million people are considered food insecure².

HEKS/EPER has been responding to the Syrian crisis since early 2017, supporting local partners to provide life-saving food, non-food items (NFI) assistance, shelter in government-controlled areas of Aleppo, East Ghouta, Dara’a, Al Hassakeh city, and Al Raqqa. HEKS/EPER supported 100’000 people in need over the past three years.

Since January 2020, **HEKS/EPER is officially registered in Syria** and is now one of the few international NGOs that can legally operate in government-controlled areas of Syria, where more than 80% of those in need of humanitarian assistance are residing. This provides HEKS/EPER with the possibility to implement projects directly and or through partners. HEKS/EPER will continue to orientate its programme to target and meet the needs of the most vulnerable underserved populations in Syria. HEKS/EPER continues to implement activities in the sectors of WASH, shelter, NFI and livelihoods.

Shelter Rehabilitation in East Ghouta



East Ghouta experienced devastating bombings driving away residents. HEKS/EPER enables the return for more than 100 families providing rehabilitated shelter.

Venezuela: All along 2020, the crisis in Venezuela has worsened, with more than 7 million people in need of assistance³. In addition to a severe economic crisis and the hyperinflation reaching its peak in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic led to an additional burden on public services and the slowing down of what already was a faltering economic system. Even though fear of COVID-19 contagions stimulated a timid return to their places of origin by some migrants (in particular, from Colombia), this tendency has reversed, and

² Syrian Arab Republic: 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan (December 2020)

³ Venezuela: 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan with Humanitarian Needs Overview (July 2020)

Hygiene Kit Distribution



Francisco Parra, 70 years old, former driver, cannot work anymore as he is incapacitated by an illness. Nobody else in his family has a job and they all suffer from the lack of basic services in the area.

thousands of people can be seen on the move again along Venezuela's roads, looking for better opportunities in the country or abroad. The migratory flows - mainly by foot, sometimes for up to 600 km - have intensified over the last quarter of 2020.

The year 2020 was pivotal for HEKS/EPER in Venezuela. The roll-out of needs-based **food security actions alone benefited more than 10'000 crisis-affected people** in Lara, Miranda, Caracas and Apure State. Moreover, basic needs were covered via large-scale hygiene kit distributions to extreme hardship cases in the same target zone. A particular focus of HEKS/EPER's aid operations was given to crisis-affected populations in the border region of Apure state. Via a need-based shelter and water & sanitation project, more than 9'000 crisis-affected Venezuelans could access safe drinking water and more than 630 severe hardship cases now live in more adequate shelters. Temporary displacement sites have been protected against floods. With regards to the COVID-19 epidemic, HEKS/EPER supported the efforts of the Venezuelan Ministry of Health by actively collaborating with WHO and UNICEF to update the

national disinfection protocol and disinfect more than 110'000 m² of surfaces in two major hospitals in Caracas. This first step is only the beginning of HEKS/EPER's ambitious aid package planned to be implemented in Venezuela. Both Swiss Solidarity and Medicor have actively supported HEKS/EPER.

Perspectives: The humanitarian situation worldwide is being monitored. HEKS/EPER will respond to new major natural or man-made disasters in new countries or countries where HEKS/EPER already implements development cooperation projects. HEKS/EPER plans to intervene in an additional country with a protracted crisis in 2021.

Promising Practices Worldwide

Hard-to-reach approach in conflict areas

So far, HEKS/EPER humanitarian aid offices are often located in the state capitals (e.g. Jérémie in Haiti or Yei in South Sudan). In the frame of the '**hard-to-reach/conflict-affected areas approach**' and to be as close as possible to the most affected population, HEKS/EPER now opened an office in the very remote town of Bwito in DRC. Working in such an environment where war or conflict is ongoing requires very different arrangements regarding security management, logistics, and conflict-sensitive programming. HEKS/EPER closely assesses conflict-affected areas and only deploys highly experienced staff. Security policies are constantly improved at HQ level, and a security focal point is active in the different security networks. HEKS/EPER thereby manages security risks while accepting that they cannot be completely avoided or mitigated. HEKS/EPER aims to **become a relevant implementation partner for large humanitarian donors** looking for agencies willing to operate in volatile environments by accessing hard-to-reach environments. The approach complements HEKS/EPER's existing working approaches in less complex settings.

Building relationships to secure access to people in need



Working in hard-to-reach areas requires discussions with all relevant actors, including to conflict parties, to allow for the implementation of interventions while ensuring safety of the team.

Infection control and prevention during the COVID-19 pandemic

Trainings in health facilities



On the job training of health practitioners in a health facility in Bangladesh.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the urgency of improving hygiene, infection prevention and control in health facilities for two reasons: To contain the spread of the virus among patients and to create a safe environment for health care workers so health facilities can remain operational for all kind of health issues.

In **Bangladesh**, HEKS/EPER has been piloting and applying WHO's and UNICEF's WASH FIT approach since 2019. Thus, HEKS/EPER is an established expert organisation on WASH in health facilities and in an excellent position to contribute to the safe functioning of health facilities during the pandemic (e.g., infection prevention and control). The projects were massively upscaled and provided formal training, on the job training, facility-level WASH improvement strategy develop-

ment and construction interventions in all 439 primary and secondary health facilities in the Rohingya camps and the host community in Cox's Bazar district.

In **Venezuela**, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the WHO and UNICEF, HEKS/EPER supported the update of the national disinfection protocol and the disinfection of more than 110'000 m² of surfaces in two major hospitals in Caracas.

WASH – water, sanitation and hygiene

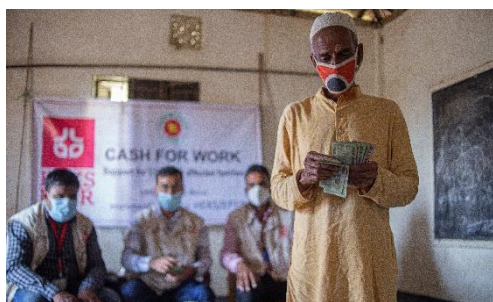
HEKS/EPER addresses the needs of people during humanitarian crises in close coordination and alignment with other humanitarian actors such as cluster systems while following local and Sphere Standards. In the early phase after an event like an earthquake or the emergence of a camp of displaced people, HEKS/EPER provides context-specific solutions for **immediate access to water** through different technologies, including water purification, construction of handpumps, and water trucking. Additionally, emergency latrines are supplied along with hygiene promotion activities. In later phases, HEKS/EPER focuses on **more sustainable solutions**. Comprehensive WASH projects are implemented following the 'building back better' paradigm, accompanied by community mobilisation for water governance, operation, and maintenance. In camps, HEKS/EPER stabilises the hygiene situation by constructing water drainage systems, establishes waste management systems, and manages faecal sludge.

Constructing WASH infrastructure



The borehole is part of a comprehensive WASH project for the host community in Bangladesh.

Cash programming



Bangladesh: Cash for Work (road maintenance) to improve reduced incomes due to COVID-19.

Between 2018 and 2020, HEKS/EPER had been running **cash programmes in 11 countries**. These used different disbursement modalities such as debit cards in Lebanon, the Hawala system in Iraq and a voucher fair in the DRC. While both unconditional and conditional cash approaches were applied, there has been a considerable shift towards unconditional cash. In recent years, unconditional cash transfers have proven to be a vehicle to **promote social cohesion between host and refugee communities**, whereby both participate in joint activities to improve the living conditions for both communities.

A quick but sound market analysis is required to decide on the appropriate cash method, if at all. It is often most effective to cleverly combine the cash approach with other activities and approaches and link it to pre-conditions. Cash programming offers fewer opportunities for fraud than in-kind distributions as procurement, transport and storage are not handled by the implementing organisation.

HEKS/EPER is aware that cash programming does not replace working towards mutual accountability, participation towards ownership as defined in the CHS. Having the right to choose goods freely does not automatically ensure ownership and decision power. Gender-sensitive cash programming remains a challenge, just as for in-kind distributions.

Cash projects 2018-2020

Haiti: **cash for work** after the cyclone Matthew

Lebanon: **unconditional/conditional cash** and cash for work for Syrian refugees and people affected by the Beirut Port Explosion

Nigeria: **unconditional cash** for IDPs

Uganda, Bidi Bidi: **cash for work** in refugee camps

Iraq: unconditional/conditional & unrestricted/restricted cash **in livelihood project for returnees**

Bangladesh: **cash for work** and **cash for livelihoods** in the Rohingya camps and the host communities

Ethiopia: **cash for work** after a drought to reconstruct water systems

DRC: **unconditional restricted cash** through a fair – for IDPs (in camps), **cash for work**

India: **unconditional unrestricted cash** for basic needs and house repair

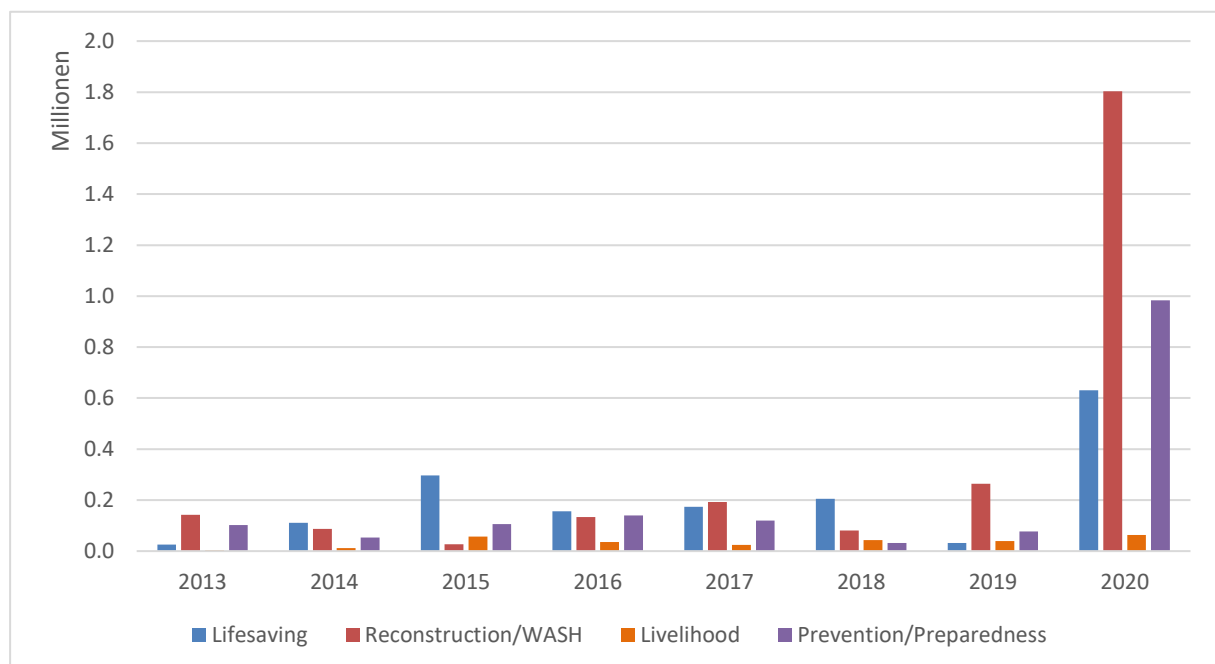
Indonesia: **conditional unrestricted cash** for owner-driven house reconstruction

Honduras: **unconditional cash** after a hurricane

Achievements & Perspectives

Achievement over the past years

Between 2013 and 2020, HEKS/EPER assisted **5.5 million people** with **humanitarian assistance**. Thereof, **1.6 million** people benefited from **life-saving emergency activities**, including the distribution of food, NFI, WASH, and cash interventions. In addition, **278'000 people** were supported to restore their **livelihoods**, and **2.7 million** people benefitted from the **reconstruction** of their houses and public infrastructures such as schools and health facilities. **Disaster prevention and preparedness** including **COVID-19** prevention and emergency aid (hygiene, water, sanitation, food security, etc.) played a pivotal role for **1.6 million people** in the countries in which HEKS/EPER works.



HA data 2013-2020: Number of people reached through HEKS/EPER's humanitarian assistance. The high numbers in 2020 are related to the COVID-19 programming with comparatively low costs per person (like hygiene awareness or the rehabilitation of health centers in Bangladesh alone reaching out to almost 1.7 M people).

With a budget of CHF 17.49 million, in **2020** alone, HEKS/EPER's humanitarian aid **supported approximately 3.4 million people** in four areas:

- Over 600'000 people were reached through life-saving emergency interventions (500'000 people only through the COVID-19 emergency measures in Western Haiti)
- Over 1.8 million people were reached through reconstruction projects (almost 1.7 M people only through the hygiene awareness and rehabilitation of health centres in Bangladesh)
- Over 60'000 people were reached through restoring livelihood projects
- Nearly 1 million people were reached through prevention and preparedness projects (mainly linked to COVID-19 awareness-raising in Bangladesh, DR Congo, Uganda and Venezuela)

In 2020, more than **3.165 million people** benefitted from **COVID-19 activities**, yet more than 2 million were reached through flexible adaptations of HEKS/EPER development projects.

2020	Emergency – Life-saving: Distributions of food/non-food, unconditional cash, etc.	Reconstruction: WASH (infrastructure & hygiene), shelter, roads, schools, etc.	Livelihood: agro-nomic support, irrigation, economic development, credit schemes	Prevention and preparedness: in 2020 focussing mainly on COVID-19	Total direct project beneficiaries
Bangladesh	12'559	1'699'568	14'800	129'276	1'840'261
Congo (DRC)	23'551	31'845	6'600	576'900	592'600
Ethiopia	4'225	57'769	4'225	203'875	265'896
Haiti	500'000	-	-	-	500'000
Honduras	10'048	6000	-	5'550	19'548
Indonesia	-	915	-	-	915
Iraq	102	-	-	-	102
Lebanon	10'835	1'120	-	-	12'045
South Sudan	-	2'862	19'044	-	21'915
Syria	22'600	-	-	5'500	22'750
Uganda	5'988	12'055	31'098	38'549	47'973
Venezuela	16'365	401	-	22'401	39'167
Zimbabwe	25'000	-	-	-	25'000
TOTAL	631'273	1'803'763	62'723	982'913	3'388'172

HA data 2020: Individuals benefitting from HEKS/EPER HA projects – per country and outcome in 2020.



Bangladesh: Awareness-raising about COVID-19 effects. HEKS/EPER country office jointly with its long-term partners of development projects delivered emergency services to the most vulnerable, distributing food basket for those who lost jobs and income in the economic crises and informing on how people lower the risk of infection.

This is HEKS/EPER

HEKS/EPER is the aid organisation of the Swiss protestant churches and campaigns for a more peaceful and equitable world supporting in 2020 jointly with 100 partner organisations and strategic global alliances with 143 projects in 33 countries people and communities in economic and social need, investing worldwide 37.58 million CHF.

HEKS/EPER is active in **development cooperation** ameliorating in 2020 with 16.14 M CHF the life of 205'000 people directly – indirectly, 2.63 M people were reached. HEKS focusses on access to land and resources, securing basic services, fostering agroecological production and inclusive market systems. It promoted conflict transformation and inclusive governance structures in the countries as well as social, economic and political inclusion of disenfranchised people.

With a budget of 17.49 M CHF, HEKS/EPER's **humanitarian aid** supported 3'388'000 people affected by disasters with emergency interventions, to save lives, restoring livelihoods and rehabilitating infrastructure. In the frame of **Church Cooperation** HEKS/EPER enabled with 3 M CHF social work of Reformed Churches in Eastern Europe and the Middle East reaching out to 38'700 people. Additional 0.94 M CHF were invested in cross-sectional IC activities such as capacity building of partners and communities. **Systemic change** and the **human rights-based approach** are guiding principles, also promoting the **nexus** between humanitarian and development activities. HEKS/EPER cultivates constant dialogue with all relevant development and Government actors, protecting civil society actors and enabling them to advocate for their needs and rights.

In Switzerland, with a budget of 28.8 M CHF, HEKS/EPER supported disadvantaged people in becoming socially and economically integrated by promoting equal opportunity, and assists jobless people, refugees and other individuals with providing day structures, legal advice, vocational trainings, language courses, dialogue platforms etc in 14 cantons.

Visit HEKS/EPER ID's Governance website: https://en.heks.ch/Institutional_Governance



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