

Human Rights

Indivisible, inalienable, universal

German Development Cooperation works towards upholding, guaranteeing and implementing human rights. In its activities, KfW Development Bank follows the guidelines on human rights issued by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in 2013.

Current situation

Human rights are not granted by anyone. All human beings are entitled to their rights from birth. And that holds true anywhere in the world: human rights are universal. Human rights root in human dignity. At the same time they aim towards preserving it.

States throughout the world have committed themselves to uphold human rights in many different international agreements and pacts. Governments must respect human rights and implement them for everyone on their territory. This includes preventing others from violating human rights. They are also a central foundation of development cooperation.

Human rights relate to many different areas of our lives. A distinction is drawn between "civil and political rights" and "economic, social and cultural rights". Civil and political rights include the right to life, the prohibition of torture and gender equality. The right to food, health and social security number are among the economic, social and cultural rights. The different human rights depend on one another and form a single entity: human rights are indivisible and each of them is equally important.

If we use a broad definition of poverty, guaranteeing human rights and the existence of poverty are mutually

exclusive. Once the right to food is realised, persons will no longer lack adequate nutrition. The same applies to the right to health, freedom of association and assembly or participation in cultural life.

The KfW development approach

In 2013 the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) published a guideline on human rights for German Development Cooperation. It is called the "Guidelines on incorporating human rights standards and principles, including gender, in programme proposals for bilateral German Technical and Financial Cooperation". It is binding for all institutions involved in German development cooperation and therefore also for KfW Development Bank. All projects must be examined in advance to determine whether they could violate or promote human rights.

By concentrating explicitly on disadvantaged and powerless people and groups, the human rights-based approach strengthens development cooperation's focus on poverty.

Just as we do, our partner countries have an obligation to respect, protect and guarantee human rights. No one expects the impossible, such as an immediate implementation of the right to water for the whole population. A commitment towards implementing human rights must nonetheless be clearly recognisable from the politics of each partner government. The donor countries support the partner countries in meeting their obligation to uphold human rights. They do so partly on the basis of their own human rights obligation.

KfW Development Bank's projects themselves help implement economic, social and cultural rights both directly and indirectly. One example of this is the construction of schools: they help to guarantee the right to education. The same applies to the promotion of hospitals and HIV/AIDS prevention: an appropriate infrastructure of health care facilities is part of assuring the right to health. Projects that promote decentralisation are

directly designed towards enhancing the participation by the population in shaping policies and fulfilling public tasks.

Indirect effects towards realising human rights can result from the building of roads and bridges, for example because they are essential for people to actually reach schools and hospitals. KfW Development Bank also supports programmes that improve access to water and affordable water tariff systems. It thus helps to ensure that people enjoy their right to an adequate standard of living and have equal opportunities to participate in economic and social life.

The implementation of human rights and the promotion of human rights standards and principles is also a cross-cutting task in KfW. Each project is analysed not only with regard to the promotion of human rights but also in order to ensure that no human rights are violated. For example, when a major infrastructure project is constructed with the assistance of KfW which requires the resettlement of inhabitants, particular attention is dedicated to their rights.



Children playing in Burkina Faso
Source: KfW-Bildarchiv / photothek.net

Burkina Faso – Protecting children from exploitation

Many children and young people in Burkina Faso have to work. They help with household chores, work in agriculture or labour in gold mines. In Burkina Faso, 5 % of children aged 6 to 15 live as migrant workers, sometimes far away from their parents. Many are abducted and taken to neighbouring countries such as Mali or Ivory Coast where they are forced to work in inhumane conditions.

In 2006 the Burkinian government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also signed the optional protocol on the sale of children. Nevertheless, it still has insufficient resources to protect the rights of children and young people effectively. Acting on behalf of the BMZ, KfW Development Bank supports it in its efforts.

Since 2005 funding from KfW Development Bank has enabled the financing of 2,200 scholarships for school attendance and training. The establishment of canteens and boarding schools, training and overnight accommodation centres have kept another 30,000 children and young people in education. Furthermore, KfW Development Bank supports the development of communal social plans for child protection and for the creation of special social funds designed to finance child protection measures.



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