

Annual Report 2023

Helvetas Nepal

Helvetas Nepal has been present in Nepal since 1956, operating under an agreement with the Government of Nepal. As the largest country program of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, which operates in approximately 30 countries worldwide, Helvetas Nepal is actively engaged in implementing programs and projects across the nation. It collaborates with numerous technical and social organizations to promote sustainable development and poverty reduction at both local and national levels. The organization's ultimate goal is to empower individuals by providing them with new opportunities, skills, and resources to enhance their livelihoods.

In its endeavors, Helvetas Nepal works in partnership with local and national non-governmental organizations, private sector entities, as well as local and national government bodies. It advocates for the principles of decentralization and subsidiarity, ensuring that decisions are made at the appropriate levels and fostering accountability throughout the development process.

Detailed information on Helvetas Nepal can be accessed at <https://nepal.helvetas.org>

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Helvetas Nepal

Bakhundole, Lalitpur,

GPO Box 688, Kathmandu, Nepal

Telephone: +977 1 5424926, +977 1 5424925

E-mail: co.np@helvetas.org

Photos: Helvetas Nepal

Cover Photo: A first-time soon-to-be mother in front of the Winterization Project-supported tent from Bheri Municipality, Jajarkot

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List of Abbreviations

CHF	Swiss Franc (1 CHF = NPR 150)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTEVT	Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training
DAGs	Disadvantaged Groups
ENSSURE	Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment
ESC	Employment Service Centre
EU	European Union
FSAN	Improving Food Security and Nutrition of Smallholder Farmers through an Agroecological Approach
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GRAPE	Green Resilient Agricultural Productive Ecosystems
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
MAF	Mitigation Action Facility
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MRC	Migration Resource Centre
MITO	Strengthening Walnut Value-chain in Nepal Project
NPR	Nepalese Rupees
PROYEL	Promotion of Youth Engagement in Local Governance Process Project
ReMi	Reintegration of Returnee Migrants
SaMi	Safer Migration Project
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSCU	South-South Cooperation Unit
TA	Technical Assistance
TBSU	Trail Bridge Support Unit
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene

Message from the Country Director

I am pleased to present the Helvetas Nepal Annual Report for 2023, highlighting our key achievements and the inspiring stories that drive our mission.



Helvetas Nepal remains committed to ensuring basic rights, fostering new perspectives, and strengthening good governance. Our focus areas include water, food, climate, trail bridges; skills, jobs, enterprises, and private sector engagement; as well as youth, governance, and migration governance. We are actively engaging with communities to implement nature-based solutions while fostering green entrepreneurship. Our efforts prioritize gender, inclusion, and rights issues, ensuring that all community members benefit equitably from these sustainable practices.

As Nepal undergoes governance reforms, we actively contribute to federal state-building by supporting political reforms and strengthening provincial and local governments. Our technical assistance promotes effective inter-governmental collaboration, adhering to the principles of Nepal's 2015 Constitution.

Our success is built on partnerships with government agencies, civil society, private businesses, and academia. We have enhanced our collaboration with Alliance 2015 Members through joint projects and emergency preparedness plans. In response to the Jajarkot earthquake crisis, Helvetas Nepal provided life-saving support and is now actively involved in recovery and reconstruction efforts.

Looking ahead, Helvetas Nepal will continue to foster partnerships and innovation, focusing on rural-urban linkages, youth engagement, the humanitarian-development nexus, gender equality, social justice, climate mitigation, urban engagement, trail-based tourism development, and digital transformation. We will emphasize strengthening localization and partnerships, private sector engagement, financial compliance, and prioritizing quality, accountability, and human resource management to enhance our impact.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Government of Nepal, our donors, including SDC, EU, IFAD, charity: water, Swiss Solidarity, Happel Foundation, Symphasis Foundation, and Esperanza Foundation, and our invaluable partners. We are motivated by the dedication of communities towards positive change. A special thanks to our dedicated staff for their teamwork and commitment.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Prabin Manandhar".

Dr. Prabin Manandhar

Country Director

Summary

Nepal has made significant progress in accessing basic services; however, disparities based on gender, ethnicity, religion, and caste persist. Gender-based violence remains a concern. These challenges intersect with broader issues such as climate vulnerability, economic challenges, and governance struggles, particularly the implementation of federalism. Urban poverty has been steadily increasing in recent years due to factors such as rapid urbanization, rural-to-urban migration, lack of adequate employment opportunities, insufficient social safety nets, and inadequate infrastructure and services in urban areas.

Helvetas Nepal has been implementing programs according to its Extended Country Strategy (2023-24). Under the Water, Food, and Climate working area, Helvetas Nepal significantly enhanced WASH facilities through collaboration with local governments and user committees. Additionally, it promoted the adoption of riverbed farming technology, strengthened the walnut value chain, boosted food systems, and encouraged green resilient agriculture, while advocating for an enabling policy environment. In the trail bridge sub-sector project, Helvetas Nepal provided technical assistance and facilitated the institutionalization of trail bridge programs within government agencies, achieving over 10,000 trail bridges by November 2023. Within the Voice, Inclusion, and Governance domain, Helvetas Nepal supported youth engagement in governance processes. Furthermore, its safer migration program offered technical assistance to federal, provincial, and local governments to protect migrant workers and their families, emphasizing the reintegration of returnees, particularly women and disadvantaged groups vulnerable throughout the migration process. Under the Skills, Jobs, and Income sector, Helvetas Nepal provided technical assistance to the government for skills development, apprenticeships, and career counseling. It also collaborated with the private sector and local government to foster private sector investment by creating an enabling business environment conducive to entrepreneurship development and the creation of decent jobs.

In 2023, Helvetas Nepal concluded its long-standing trail bridge sub-sector program and river-bed farming project while expanding south-south cooperation efforts in Ethiopia for trail bridges. Additionally, the organization, along with Alliance 2015 members, responded to the Jajarkot earthquake by providing food and non-food relief support. Moving forward, the organization aims to enhance engagement in rural-urban linkages, significantly bolster its work with youth, improve the humanitarian-development nexus, advance gender equality and climate action, and leverage digital transformation in alignment with its Extended Country Strategy (2023-24).

Helvetas Nepal hosted Helvetas President Regula Rytz's visit to Nepal and organized high-level meetings with the Prime Minister, Opposition Leader, and Chief Minister, among others. The organization hosted regional workshops on Global Human Resources; Skills, Jobs, and Income; Partnership and Capacity Development, and facilitated visits from Helvetas Ethiopia, Bridges to Prosperity, Charity: Water, and the Federation of the Swiss Italian NGOs (FOSIT). The organization has been successful in securing several acquisitions from SDC, MAF, GIZ, charity: water, Swiss Solidarity, and Esperanza Foundation. Helvetas Nepal has reinforced its partnership with Alliance 2015 Members as the country lead with the initiation of a joint pilot project, and joint emergency preparedness and response plan. It will continue to participate in and host regional workshops and exchanges.

Nepal is currently not facing major safety and security issues. However, the country has a high incidence of gender-based violence, including abuse and harassment in the workplace. It adopts a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment, abuse of authority, and discrimination in the workplace. Nepal is also highly susceptible to disasters and epidemics. The organization has a crisis communication and response mechanism in place. While the implementing project partners are generally reliable, additional measures including capacity building, interval reviews, and internal audits are required to ensure financial internal controls in this high fiduciary risk environment.

Helvetas Nepal will develop the next Country Strategy (2025-2028) to be fully aligned with the new Global Strategy (2025-2028), in coordination with the rhythm of the SDC contribution. Helvetas Nepal will focus on quality programming, system and compliance, and people and culture.

Country Context Update

Nepal has made significant progress in access to basic services, leading to human development improvements. However, progress is not evenly distributed. Exclusion persists based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, religion, and caste, while gender-based violence continues to pose a threat to a significant portion of women of reproductive age. These challenges often parallel wider trends, particularly concerning climate vulnerability, macroeconomic challenges and opportunities, and overarching governance issues including the ongoing struggle to implement federalism.

Inflation persisted for the third consecutive year, driven by increases in both food and non-food prices. Additionally, domestic policies and trade restrictions from India resulted in a notable decrease in goods imports. However, remittance inflows saw growth after a period of outward migration. People are migrating to urban areas seeking better education, health, and job opportunities, leading to a rise in the urban population. The fourth Living Standard Survey 2022/23 revealed that urban poverty in the country rose to 18.34% in 2022/23 from 15.46% in 2010/11. On the other hand, rural poverty decreased from 27.43% in 2010/11 to 24.66% in 2022/23.

Nepal has the potential to increase the production and exports of goods and services, including high-value agriculture and agro-processing, textiles and garments, footwear, hydropower, tourism, and information and communication technology services.

Helvetas Nepal Country Strategy

The extended Country Strategy (2023-24) is aligned with the Fifteenth Plan of the Government of Nepal with the vision of **achieving equality and sustainability by facilitating people's access to capital and skills**, minimum wages, and social security arrangements. It is guided by the Helvetas Global Strategy (2021-24). It is further aligned with the Swiss Cooperation Programme for Nepal (2023-26) which has three integrated domains of interventions - Federal State building, Employment and Income, and Migration. The overall development goal of the strategy is – All women and men in Nepal, especially those who are economically poor and socially marginalized, have dignified lives.

The goal has been pursued through eight working fields under three working areas in the forms of program implementation (people), advisory support (partnerships), and policy advocacy (framework conditions). Helvetas Nepal has integrated gender equality and social inclusion into the projects to increase the access of women and marginalized groups to education and employment, while also aiming to reduce discriminatory and harmful practices, including child marriage, caste-based discrimination, dowry, witchcraft accusations, and menstrual restrictions.

Humanitarian support is connected with these efforts to ensure immediate relief needs are met while laying the foundation for sustainable long-term development. This approach not only addresses urgent needs but also builds resilience and capacity within communities to thrive in the future. Additionally, Helvetas Nepal is focused on working with youth, fostering their potential and active participation in social and economic development. Urban engagement initiatives are being initiated to address the unique challenges faced by populations in emerging towns, promoting inclusive and sustainable urban engagement. Digitalization is another key area, with efforts to harness digital tools and technologies to enhance project implementation, improve access to information, and create new opportunities for education and employment.

Advocacy efforts are embedded within the projects to improve the legal and policy environment, thereby creating space for citizens, civil society, and the private sector to engage effectively. Furthermore, target communities and networks have been empowered as rights holders, enhancing their voice and participation in local governance.

Working Area: Water, Food and Climate

Through the working area "Water, Food and Climate", Helvetas aims to enable people to gain sustainable access to natural resources, safe water, sanitation and hygiene, nutritious and healthy food, and technical and financial support services for improved and climate-resilient living conditions in rural and urban areas. There are four working fields under this working area and Helvetas Nepal has been involved in all these working fields as described below:

Working Field: WASH and Water Governance

Access to safe Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) is recognized as a fundamental human right. The broader Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Program of Helvetas Nepal improves **citizens'** sustainable access to safe drinking water, improved sanitation, and hygiene facilities at home, in schools and in other public places.

The projects under the broader IWRM program of this working field are given in the table below:

Project Name	Funding Source	Duration	HELVETAS Role
<i>Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Program</i>	Public donations	Jan 2022- Dec 2025	Project Management
<i>Increasing Access to WASH - 22-23</i>	charity: water	Aug 2022- Aug 2023	Project Management
<i>Increasing Access to WASH - 23-24</i>	charity: water	Aug 2023- Aug 2024	Project Management

(Italics denote project/s contributing to two or more working fields)

The program intervention includes capacitating stakeholders and building WASH infrastructures in the working areas, thereby directly contributing to enhanced access to safe drinking water, and improved sanitation and hygiene facilities for all the people in its working areas. The improved WASH facilities have multidimensional positive impacts on the lives of the poor and excluded people and tangibly reduce their drudgery. The projects under the WASH and water governance working field are aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

In 2023, the program completed the implementation of 93 drinking water supply schemes in collaboration with the respective municipalities. Among the schemes completed, 86 were funded by the charity: water grant and the rest seven were realized from Helvetas own fund. These 93 newly built and rehabilitated schemes provided direct access to improved drinking water to 41,229 people (49% women) of 7,176 households. Almost all these households now have a separate tap stand in their respective household premises. Furthermore, the completed schemes also supplied drinking water in 64 schools serving an additional 13,801 students (50% girls) and 53 public institutions benefiting 388 employees and many others visiting the institutions.

The interventions by the projects have resulted in tangible positive changes in the sanitation and hygiene practices of the local people. In 2023, 6382 additional households started using water filters in their homes for safe drinking water. Similarly, 7,075 households managed hand washing facilities (handwashing buckets with attached tap/handwashing platform) in their yard; 7,043 households constructed and used '*Chang*' (rack for drying kitchen utensils) and **6,609 households used waste disposal pits.**

Multiple-use systems and climate-resilient WASH are other key intervention areas. Among 93 drinking water schemes, 18 schemes were developed as multiple-use systems and provided irrigation facilities mainly for kitchen gardens on about 20 hectares of land. Additionally, source protection and conservation activities were carried out in 10 schemes.

Governance and advocacy are also vital components of the WASH interventions aimed at addressing contemporary WASH challenges within the country. The projects supported the preparation of a Water Use Master Plan (WUMP) with a digitalized WASH inventory in three rural municipalities. A total of 1,702 individuals received training on water supply, 2,747 on sanitation and 342 multiple use system and climate resilient WASH.

Helvetas Nepal collaborates with other organizations for advocacy and participates in different events and forums in the WASH sector. It advocated for addressing the pressing WASH issues and replication of its

effective approaches. Notably, Helvetas played an active role in the entire Joint Sector Review (JSR) process – an important event of the sector this year.

In response to a powerful earthquake in Jajarkot, Helvetas Nepal carried out emergency response activities in the affected areas. Under the WASH cluster, the organization supported hygiene kits, water buckets and mugs to 1,000 households in collaboration with Alliance 15 members.

The WASH and Water Governance projects had a budget that represented 27.59% of the total country program budget this year, and the expenditure was 28.17% of the same budget.

Case Story: Water supply scheme transforms menstrual hygiene management in a school!

Menstruation is a crucial aspect of human existence, marking the beginning of life. However, misconceptions, blind faith, and taboos surrounding menstruation lead to violence, abuse, and discrimination against girls and women in many societies. This persists in many parts, particularly in the rural areas, of Nepal too. The girls and women there are considered filthy and impure during their periods, and they face a range of problems for this reason. In extreme cases, they are subjected to inhuman conditions **such as being kept in a “Chhaupadi”** – often a makeshift hut, a cowshed, or an isolated house which are unsafe and lack proper sanitation and hygiene facilities, during their periods. This adversely affects their physical and mental health, education, employment, self-respect, and dignity as well.

While urban areas have seen some positive changes in attitudes towards menstruation in recent years, the situation in rural areas, especially in Karnali and Sudurpaschim provinces, is still severe. Awareness and facilities for menstrual hygiene management (MHM) are woefully inadequate in households, schools, and public institutions in these provinces. Many schools, particularly in rural areas, lack quality toilets, girls and women-friendly facilities, adequate water for cleaning, and proper disposal methods for used pads. Taboos and negative attitudes towards menstruation further complicate matters, leading to discomfort among girls attending school during their periods and resulting in missed school days. Although the government provides free sanitary pads in schools, their poor quality deters girls from using them.

This lack of proper MHM facilities in schools becomes evident in the case of Suryodaya High School in Dullu Municipality 12 in Karnali province. Manisha Nepali, a tenth-grade student at the school, has a bitter experience of menstruation while at school. She recounts instances where she either skipped school or left classes pretending to be sick due to the unavailability of sufficient water in the school toilets, the absence of handwashing facilities, and the deplorable condition of the toilets. The disposal of the used **pads posed a considerable challenge. Manisha’s worries escalated as she approached the Secondary Education Examination (SEE) which needed more focused study time. She no longer had the option to miss school during menstruation. In expressing her frustration, she lamented, “At times, I wished I were a boy so that I had no menstruation, and I could have walked freely”. It is disheartening when a girl wishes to change her sex due to the challenges posed by menstruation.**

The implementation of the Pokharakhola solar-powered lift water supply scheme in Dullu municipality - 12 by the IWRM Program brought about tangible improvements in MHM facilities in Suryodaya High School. The project implemented under the charity: water 400 grant with co-funding from Dullu Municipality was completed in 2022. The program not only supplied water to this school but also supported the construction of taps, handwashing stations, and facilities for proper pad disposal on the school premises. Additionally, it conducted orientation sessions on MHM for students in grades 9-10 with a cultural Program to raise awareness about menstruation issues. Pokharakhola solar-powered lift water supply scheme serves 455 students and staff in the school and 68 households with 340 population in the village.



Manisha Nepali washing her hands at the handwashing station in the school.

The improved WASH facilities in the school alleviated the worries of students like Manisha. With sufficient water and improved facilities, managing menstruation at school is no longer a source of tension. *“Menstruation while at school, no tension! We now have enough water and facilities to manage it”*, says Manisha. Kiran, a woman teacher in the school, has observed a significant decrease in the number of students missing classes during their menstruation cycles with improvement in WASH facilities, particularly the availability of enough water in the toilets, after the implementation of the Pokharkhola solar-powered water supply scheme.

Working Field: Food and Nutrition

Helvetas attempts to build partnerships among public, civic and private actors to enhance their competencies to secure access to land, sustainable agriculture practices, food systems, services, and markets and advocate for enabling policy frameworks to increase the availability of affordable, nutritious and healthy food for disadvantaged people.

The projects in this working field are as follows:

Project Name	Funding Source	Duration	Helvetas Role
<i>Strengthening Walnut Value Chain in Nepal (MITO) Project-II</i>	Public donations, Happel Foundation	Jan. 2021 – Dec. 2025	Project Management
<i>Riverbed Farming (RbF) Project</i>	Public donations	Jan. 2019 – Dec. 2023	Project Management
<i>Improving Food Security and Nutrition of Smallholder Farmers through an Agroecological Approach (FSAN)</i>	Public donations, FastenAktion	Sep. 2022 – Dec. 2024	Project Management
<i>Green Resilient Agricultural Productive Ecosystems (GRAPE)</i>	EU, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), implementation by GIZ	Sep. 2022 – Nov. 2024	Project Management

(Italics indicate projects straddling two or more working fields)

As one of the working fields of Helvetas, Food and Nutrition aims to improve food security and livelihood resilience of Nepali citizens especially disadvantaged people through sustainable and climate-resilient agricultural value chains. It supports increasing the availability of affordable, nutritious, and healthy food for disadvantaged people through enhancing the capacity of diverse actors (governments, civil society organizations and private sectors) at multiple levels (local, provincial and federal) on secure access to land, sustainable agriculture practices, extension services, food systems, markets and enabling policy frameworks. In 2023, four projects namely MITO Walnut, FSAN, RbF, and GRAPE were implemented

under this working field to contribute to outcome 2 of the Helvetas Nepal Extended Country Strategy (2023-24). They contribute to strengthening localized agriculture extension systems, strengthening agro-based enterprises through a market system development approach, and promoting water-efficient, climate-friendly, agroecological technologies to improve income and sustainable food production of resource-poor and disadvantaged communities. They also put a thrust on managing knowledge of good practices, methods, and evidence-based policy advocacy to institutionalize the system.

In 2023, these four projects collaborated with 27 municipalities (14 in Karnali and 13 in Madhesh provinces), five civil society organizations and 23 private actors and reached 7,946 farming households including 58% women and 80% disadvantaged groups. Similarly, 366 agriculture service providers capacitated and mobilized locally to serve agricultural extension services for 6,648 farming households (56% women and 79% disadvantaged groups). A total of 976 households adopted sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture technologies and practices. Reportedly, 5,356 farming households (55% women) gained additional income through market-oriented production and sustainable market linkages.

The projects regularly facilitated concerned municipalities to promote the integration of riverbed farming, walnut value chain, climate resilient agriculture and agroecological practices into their annual plans with provision of resources. As a result, NPR 11.27 million was allocated for the promotion of such sustainable agricultural practices by government bodies in RbF, MITO and FSAN projects working municipalities. Similarly, two municipalities in the Jumla district undertook the formulation and endorsement of a policy framework, specifically the walnut nursery guideline.

In summary, the RbF project, in close collaboration with local governments, supported 6,274 farming households in 13 municipalities of Madhesh Province in adopting riverbed farming technology, cultivating 919 hectares of dry riverbed land. Similarly, the MITO Walnut project successfully reached 805 households (approximately 4,500 members) in 10 municipalities of Jumla and Kalikot districts, significantly enhancing the knowledge and skills of over 2,760 participants involved in the walnut value chain. Consequently, 26,660 walnut saplings were successfully grafted with a 75% success rate, and 719 farmers in the project area produced over 20 tons of soft-shelled walnuts. The GRAPE project aims to strengthen the sustainable agricultural ecosystems of 365 households in two municipalities of Humla by promoting various climate-resilient agricultural practices. The FSAN project supported 502 farming households (100% women and 51% Dalit) from two municipalities in Jajarkot and Kalikot districts, in improving their food security and nutrition. This was achieved by adopting agroecological and climate-resilient agriculture approaches to increase sustainable food production. Reportedly, 380 farmers have embraced climate-resilient technologies, 54% of farmers have adopted a more nutritious diet, and 52 households extended their food sufficiency by at least one month during the reporting period.



A glimpse of vegetable production in the kitchen garden of Surjakala Sijali, Barekot-1, Jajarkot (Photo: FSAN)

This year Food and Nutrition projects represented 4.12% of the total country program budget and 4.26% of the expenditure.

Case story: Riverbed farming has become base for the livelihood of farmer

Raj Nandan Thakur, an inhabitant of Bhangah-1, Mahottari has started riverbed farming, and that has become the base for livelihood. Before starting riverbed farming, Mr Thakur was working as a carpenter and his wife was engaged in seasonal agriculture labor. However, these seasonal earnings were not enough for household expenditures for their six family members and sometimes they had to take a loan from the landlords at a higher interest rate. When they were unable to pay back loans on time, they had to face many insults (why take a loan if you are not able to pay back in time, why have more children, etc) from their society members. In the meantime, they came in contact with the staff of the Community Development and Advocacy Forum (CDAFN) and discussed the possibility of riverbed vegetable cultivation along the Ratu River and they also joined riverbed vegetable cultivation together with Janajagriti farmer group members. They received technical know-how on riverbed farming from CDAFN technical staff. Initially, they cultivated vegetables only on 2 Katha (0.07 hectare) river basin land and now cultivate vegetables on 6 Katha (0.20 ha) land and can earn NPR 200000. Urmila Thakur, the wife of Raj Nandan, equally supports riverbed vegetable cultivation.



Raj Nandan and his wife Urmila on the river-bed farm

Raj Nandan and his wife Urmila are now very happy with the additional income from riverbed vegetables which has helped them to be able to lease 1 Bigha (0.68 hectares) of land for paddy cultivation and 6 Kattha (0.20 hectares) for vegetable cultivation. Additional earnings from the riverbed and seasonal earnings from carpentry works have contributed to positive changes in their livelihood and have become very helpful in house repair, free from the loan, marriage of a daughter, education of children, and obtaining carpentry skills training for his son. Raj Bahadur feels that even though he had many ups and downs in his family life but now feels that the hard time of their family has gone away. For bringing these positive changes in his family's livelihood, he gives credit to CDAFN and the riverbed farming project for providing livelihood options through riverbed vegetable cultivation.

Working Field: Climate and Disaster Resilience

Nepal was ranked as the 4th climate-vulnerable country¹ despite its meager (less than 0.1%) contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. It stands 10th as the most affected country in terms of the long-term climate risk index² from 2000 to 2019. Climate-induced disasters are common in Nepal which take many lives **every year. Nepal's economy and livelihood options have been severely affected by the impacts of climate change and disasters.** The poor and disadvantaged communities are affected most owing to their weak adaptation capacities. Helvetas Nepal through its sectoral projects supported them with improving their resilience.

The projects in this working field are as follows:

Project Name	Funding Source	Duration	Helvetas Role
<i>Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Program</i>	charity: water, public donations	Jan. 2022 - Dec 2024	Project Management
<i>A2015 Urban Resilience Project</i>	Own funds of Helvetas, PIN, and WHH	Jan. 2023 - May 2024	Project steering partner
<i>Innovation in Enterprise Development and Job Creation (InElam)</i>	Happel Foundation, Esperanza Foundation, Symphysis Foundation	Jan. 2021 – Dec. 2024	Project Management
<i>MITO (Strengthening Walnut Value Chain in Nepal)</i>	Public donations, Happel Foundation	Jan. 2021 – Dec 2025	Project Management
<i>Improving Food Security and Nutrition of Smallholder Farmers through an Agroecological Approach (FSAN)</i>	Fastenaktion, public donations	Sep 2022 – Dec. 2024	Project Management
<i>Green Resilient Agricultural Productive Ecosystems (GRAPE)</i>	European Union, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, and BMZ, implementation by GIZ	Sep. 2022 – Nov. 2024	Project Management in Humla
Afnoghar	Swiss Solidarity	July 2023-Aug. 2024	Project management

(Italics denote project/s contributing to two or more working fields.)

To contribute to making the WASH sector climate resilient, Helvetas Nepal supported three municipalities in formulating Water Use Master Plans which considered the climate risks and their impacts while assessing the water sources and their potential uses. Water source conservation activities were implemented in 10 drinking water schemes, reviving and augmenting the water yield benefitting 4,479 people. 18 multiple-use systems were implemented facilitating the use of excess water for vegetable production in 20 hectares of kitchen gardening. The capacity of 342 beneficiaries was enhanced on retention, recharge, and reuse of water.

Together with Alliance 2015 members, Helvetas Nepal provided 65 women from urban slums with skill training (production of felt goods, two-wheeler training) as livelihood options. The project also aims to facilitate the access of the urban slum dwellers to the social safety nets.

Helvetas Nepal initiated landscape restoration through bamboo plantation in fallow land benefitting 80 vulnerable and poor households and provided training on producing high-value bamboo products. This not only restores the riverbanks but also enhances the adaptation capacity of poor and vulnerable people. Similarly, it also supported private sector entrepreneurs in producing bio-paints (made of cow dung), leaf plates, and terracotta teacups for replacement of disposable plastic plates and cups.

On agriculture, Helvetas Nepal supported two local governments in setting municipal objectives for the development of climate-resilient agriculture value chains and provided climate-resilience agriculture training to more than 200 farmers. Besides, it has capacitated 30 municipal representatives and 13 municipal staff in key policy aspects of sustainable, climate resilient, and business-oriented development of the walnut value chain. It has continued training the walnut farmers for sustainable harvesting from the

¹ Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) Assessment Report (AR-5)

² Global Climate Risk Index, 2021, German Watch

forest, composting, mulching, and botanical pesticides, and the nursery entrepreneurs on producing resilient rootstocks/scion. To develop long-term sustainable agriculture practices, Helvetas Nepal with its partners Fastenaktion and SAHAS Nepal, is also engaged in supporting 502 smallholder farmers with an agroecological approach.

This year, Helvetas with Alliance 2015 members supported the earthquake-affected people in two municipalities in Karnali Province with various food and non-food items. It also provided winterization support to 846 people in three municipalities. The winterization package includes a family tent, blanket, sleeping mattress, and floor mattress.

Helvetas Nepal also started an initiative to restore stone masonry houses that Helvetas technically and financially supported to earthquake-affected people in Sindhupalchowk post-2015 earthquake. The houses were made of drystone masonry reinforced with wooden bands and posts. Most of these bands started decaying due to the use of softwood. The piloting of technology has been completed and is ready for implementation in 2024.



A house after completed restoration works at Helambu-5.

In 2024, Helvetas Nepal will start a pilot project on improving the climate resilience of poor and vulnerable people at the local level following an ecosystem-based adaptation approach. The project will also work on strengthening the climate actions of Helvetas through its various projects. It will continue building stakeholder partnerships and networking.

The allocation for “Climate and Disaster Resilience” projects in the country program budget accounted for 5.40% of the total, with a corresponding expenditure of 3.58%.

Working Field: Bridges and Roads

Improving access to economic opportunities and public services by building trail bridges and rural roads is a core component of Helvetas’ **strategy**. Helvetas aims that the population, in particular disadvantaged women and men, has increased access to markets, schools, health centers and other public services because of newly built and well-maintained trail bridges, rural roads and tracks.

The projects in this working field are as follows:

Project name	Funding source	Duration	Helvetas role
Trail Bridge Support Unit (TBSU); Trail Bridge Sub-Sector Program	SDC and GoN	2019 – July 2023	Advisory
South-South Cooperation Unit	Various	2016-Dec 2021	Project Management

Trail Bridge Support Unit (TBSU) was phased out in November 2023. The closure of the project brought an end to a long and extremely successful partnership between the governments of Nepal, Switzerland and Helvetas Nepal.

During the final year of 2023, 641 bridges were newly constructed and repaired. This led to over 1.1 million people (60% DAGs, 48% women) directly benefiting from safer and improved access and the creation of 1.5 million person-days of employment (60% DAGs, 30% women).

The year also marked the construction of the 10,000th trail bridge in Nepal- a remarkable achievement, which was celebrated with the symbolic inauguration of the Marin Khola trail bridge by the Honourable Minister of Urban Development (Federal), Chief Minister of Bagmati Province, and Her Excellency the Swiss Ambassador to Nepal. (Please also refer to the case story below). As a part of the celebrations, the federal and provincial governments also organized photo exhibitions throughout the country, which were supported by TBSU/Helvetas Nepal. The Department of Local Infrastructure (DoLI), supported by TBSU, also presented the success of the trail bridge program at the High-level 15th Regional Environmentally Sustainable Transport Forum in Asia in October 2023.

Local, provincial and federal governments have now all taken over the implementation of the trail bridge program. This has largely been possible with the capacity strengthening measures and the proactive role played by TBSU to ensure that the program is executed as per the spirit of federalization. This primarily included - strengthening the steering mechanisms at the provincial and federal level; support provided to three provincial governments to promulgate their own Trail Bridge Strategies; enhancement of technical, social and management competencies to government staff (457 Engineers, Sub-Engineers, and Assistant Sub-Engineers) and NGOs (68 Sub-Engineers/Assistant Sub-Engineers and 83 Social Mobilizers and management staff); handing-over of store management (five to provinces and two to federal) and **Monitoring Information Systems to government authorities; and the “accompanied capacity building” of PTAPs.**

The trail bridge program is now well institutionalized within the government system and is delivering as per the needs of the country. Rural isolation is decreasing, and with it, there are greater opportunities for socio-economic development. On average, trail bridges save 2.1 hours (for a two-way journey). Furthermore, the impact study on trail bridges shows that there has been an 8.5% rise in school attendance after the construction of trail bridges; an 84% decrease in the lack of river crossing as an obstacle to seeking medical treatment; the emergence of new shops/markets at 15% of sampled sites; and the decrease in the price of available goods at 30% of the sampled sites. An immersive/quality study that utilized a historical lens over older bridges (built since the 1970s) and more recent ones, also **highlighted their influence as being “trans-local” with far-reaching influence on the lives, livelihoods, commerce and maintenance of state bureaucracy.** The study also highlighted how for many rural people, despite the expansion of road networks and the availability of motorized transport, they still prefer to travel by trails/tracks and across trail bridges, to save money on fares (even though time is saved via the buses).

Beyond Nepal, Helvetas, through the South-South Collaboration Unit (SSCU), was also engaged in supporting the TRAIL Ethiopia project, which is being implemented by Helvetas Ethiopia and Bridges to Prosperity. SSCU Nepali trail bridge experts have been directly supporting their counterparts for the construction of bridges, and enhancing their skills, while simultaneously also working towards system development. In December, an exposure visit by Ethiopian government officials, Helvetas Ethiopia, and Bridges to Prosperity took place. During the mission, interactions took place with government actors, TA providers, NGOs, bridge fitters and site visits to diverse bridge sites and fabrication factories. In the end, the participants reflected that they were inspired by **Nepal’s achievements and would be taking back new ideas, which they committed to developing into concrete strategies back home.**

The allocation for Bridges and Roads projects in the country program budget accounted for 14.37% of the total, with a corresponding expenditure of 16.85%.

Case story: Inauguration of the 10,000th trail bridge

Trail bridge construction in Nepal has evolved significantly since 1964, progressing from small-scale projects to impactful initiatives like the Bridge Building at Local Level (BBLL) Project and the Trail Bridge Sub-Sector Program (TBSSP). Helvetas Nepal has played a crucial role in providing technical assistance. The sector's systematic development, starting with the Suspension Bridge Division (SBD) in 1964, received support from the Swiss Association for Technical Assistance (SATA). Over the years, Helvetas, on behalf of SDC, continued to assist the government in trail bridge construction, aligning with strategies like the Nepal Trail Bridge Strategy (2006) and the Trail Bridge Sector Wide Approach (TB-SWAp) in 2009. The sector witnessed a substantial increase in annual outputs: 284 bridges (2009-2014), 460 bridges (2014-2019), and 593 bridges (2019-2023), with a record 740 completed in 2023 alone. In 2015, following Nepal's new federal constitution, Helvetas supported the adjustment of the trail bridge program to local and provincial governments. After more than six decades, the longstanding and successful project was concluded in November 2023.



Dignitaries after the inauguration of the Marin Khola bridge. Photo: TBSU

On November 9, 2023, Nepal marked the inauguration of its 10,000th trail bridge, whose construction concluded in July of the same year. This Long Span Trail bridge spans 283 meters and serves 200 households, the majority belonging to ethnic communities such as Tamang, Majhi, and Magar. The completion of this significant bridge highlights the remarkable progress in the sector. Beyond the construction achievements, the milestone is especially noteworthy as these bridges, utilized by over one million people daily, play a vital role in fostering social and economic changes. They enhance access to schools, health facilities, and markets while facilitating the exchange of ideas and people in previously isolated communities. The event received extensive coverage in both print and social media in Nepal and internationally, and the achievement was also featured on Swiss public broadcasting channels.

Later in the year, Switzerland will conclude this longstanding and successful project with great satisfaction and pride. Meanwhile, the government is set to continue trail bridge building on its own. The SDC and Helvetas are proud to have been a part of this collaboration.

Working Area: Voice, Inclusion and Cohesion

Engaging in the working area "Voice, Inclusion and Cohesion", Helvetas attempts to promote partnership with public and private actors to amplify the voices of local communities and to enhance the space for civil society and private sector actors to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes while developing capacities of public institutions to deliver socially inclusive and gender-responsive services

and articulate transformative policies. This is expected to reduce inequalities, enhance social cohesion, promote human rights and promote safe and productive migration. There are three working fields under this working area and Helvetas Nepal has been involved in all these working fields, except "Conflict Transformation", as described below:

Working Field: Governance and Civic Space

The working field of Governance & Civic Space aims to empower communities and engage in political decision-making, strengthen human rights and claim access to quality public services, while government and civil society partners have increased capacity and mutual trust to articulate policies that improve frame conditions for effective decentralized governance, as well as an expanded civic space and enabling environment for civil society.

The dedicated projects in this working field are as follows:

Project Name	Funding Source	Duration	Helvetas Role
Promotion of Youth Engagement in Local Governance Process (PROYEL)	European Union	Jan.2022-Mar 2025	Project Management
Good Governance and GESI	Public donations	Apr.2021- Dec 2024	Project Management

Helvetas Nepal stands out for its concerted efforts to engage with sub-national governments, be it at the local or provincial level. This strategic approach, adopted across almost all projects, underscores the organization's commitment to effective project implementation by aligning with governmental frameworks and leveraging local opportunities. Moreover, Helvetas Nepal has tailored its working methodologies to accommodate this engagement, ensuring that projects are not only designed with governmental collaboration in mind but also adjusted as necessary to facilitate smooth cooperation.

The implementation of the Promotion of Youth Engagement in Local Governance Process (PROYEL) Project was expedited in eight selected municipalities of Karnali and Madhesh provinces. Because of the co-financing requirement in PROYEL, the Good Governance and GESI Project has been embedded in the former from 2022. Additionally, the project fund has also been utilized for co-financing a project entitled "Strengthening Governance for Development and Social Justice of Dalit Women" aimed to foster the socio-economic development and political participation of Dalit women and implemented by the Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO). The project, principally financed by Bread for the World, is implemented in four municipalities of Madhesh, Gandaki and Sudur Paschim provinces. Apart from the above-mentioned dedicated projects, many sectoral projects (e.g., TBSU, IWRMP, RbF, ENSSURE, SaMi, ReMi, etc.) also contributed to this working field but are reported under their specific sections.

Additionally, the initiation of the Federalism Working Group, convened by the Good Governance and GESI Project, further emphasizes Helvetas Nepal's proactive approach to promoting collaboration and coordination among its projects to enhance federal state-building efforts. Through shared experiences and thematic discussions, this group serves as a forum for addressing common challenges and developing cohesive strategies in alignment with Helvetas Nepal's overarching goals.

In 2023, Helvetas Nepal's projects demonstrated extensive collaboration with governments at all levels, marking a significant milestone in their endeavors. This collaborative spirit resulted in tangible improvements across various sectors, with 22 local governments receiving support to enhance their WASH service delivery, while 190 local governments augmented their capacities to integrate safer migration provisions into their plans and policies. Additionally, eight local governments received assistance to bolster their engagement with local youths. Many flagship projects such as SaMi, ENSSURE, TBSU, and IWRMP successfully secured financial contributions from local governments, further solidifying the partnership with governmental bodies. The organization's proactive approach was evident through the organization of numerous orientation events on governance-related topics, which attracted a diverse audience of 6556 individuals (46% women, 46% disadvantaged group). Throughout the year, collaboration with local governments and stakeholders remained smooth, highlighting the importance of recognizing and involving sub-national governments in a timely manner to effectively address community needs.

Helvetas Nepal's support extended to civil society organizations (CSO), with 77 CSOs integrating safer migration issues into their plans and eight youth panels receiving assistance in advocacy activities. The adoption of public audit practices and project-specific accountability mechanisms became commonplace, reflecting the organization's commitment to transparency and stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, the Helvetas Nepal Grievance Redressal portal, launched in 2022, continued to serve as an effective platform for stakeholders to raise concerns and provide feedback on project activities. Additionally, the organization reported 49 policy changes that positively impacted the operational landscape for CSOs and local authorities.

This year, Governance and Civic Space projects represented 2.30% of the total country program budget and 2.69% of the expenditure.

Case story: Empowering youths

Twenty-six-year-old Pramila Uprety, a resident of Hariwon Municipality-4, Patuwa, has already voted twice in the last ten years. However, she has just visited four times in the municipality office. Her first visit was 10 years ago to get a recommendation for a citizenship certificate and the second was two years ago to get a marriage registration certificate. The other two visits were to seek jobs and other family affairs. An employer of a local civil society organization, Uprety, a graduate of management, has never realized that the municipality can provide the necessary support for employment and another issue of youths living in municipal areas. She used to consider voting periodically as her democratic right and her engagement.

Richa Singh Danuwar, 24, a national Kabbadi Player and Youth Panel Coordinator of Kshireswornath Municipality of Dhanusha, has traveled to many parts of Nepal. Like other youths, Danuwar voted in national and local elections, but she has rarely participated in any other activities of the municipality. *“Attending a few workshops in the last five months, I came to know the process of engagement with local government. I have been working now to generate awareness among the youth mobilizing members from the ward level panel to engage with municipality’s activities,”* said Danuwar



Pramila Uprety(1st pic) and Gayatri Pariyar (2nd pic) attending a training session on federalism and local governance

Funded by the European Union and implemented by Helvetas Nepal in close partnership with local NGOs Women Empowerment Action Forum (WEAF) in Karnali Province and Sahayogi Samaj Nepal (SSN) in Madhesh Province, the Promotion of Youth Engagement in Local Governance Process (PROYEL) project has demonstrated the impact of equipping youths with basic information on constitutional and legal processes. This initiative has significantly increased youth participation in exercising their democratic rights and duties through dialogue and engagement with local governments.

The first and foremost important thing Ankit Chaudhary, coordinator of the youth Panel of Barahathawa Municipality, did in the last five months is forming youth a panel at the ward level and organizing a few meetings, forming a group on Whatsapp, and on social media, to share common interacts, issues related to youth. *“As per our suggestion, the mayor and ward chairs of our municipality agreed to incorporate some youth entrepreneurs and skill development program in the annual budget,”* said Chaudhary.

Studying BBS second year at a campus, Gayatri Pariyar, 21, a Dalit girl, from Hariwon Municipality ward 2 Lalvitti, does not know the process of engagement and how to make the local level accountable. *“After taking part in the two-day workshop in Lalbandi, I learned a lot of things about federalism, our rights and duties as well as ways to engage with local government,”* said Pariyar.

Dipendra Mahato Koiri, Youth Panel leader of Hariwon Municipality, said that the perception of youths is **changing and there will be more engagement of youths at the local level in the coming days.** *“The last few programs equipped us with knowledge and information regarding the law, constitutional rights, federalism, and structures.”*

Working Field: Migration

Migration-related interventions contribute to Helvetas' strategy for strengthening the capacities of government and non-government institutions to deliver inclusive services and articulate transformative policies aimed at reducing inequalities, enhancing social cohesion, and ensuring safe and productive migration and reintegration. In a context where foreign employment increasingly serves as a primary source of livelihood for a significant portion of the population in Nepal, Helvetas Nepal supports the enhancement of migration governance systems to protect the rights and well-being of migrant workers, returnees, and their families:

The projects in this working field are as follows:

Project Name	Funding Source	Duration	Helvetas Role
Safer Migration (SaMi) Program	SDC and GoN	Sept 2018–July 2024	Technical Assistance
Reintegration of Returnee Migrant Workers (ReMi)	SDC	July 2022–July 2026	Technical Assistance

In 2023, SaMi reached a total of 843,222 beneficiaries (35% women and 82% from discriminated groups) through various activities. The program, via Migrant Resource Centers (MRCs), provided information on safer migration practices to 452,724 individuals (including 128,930 women). SaMi, through its legal and paralegal component, supported 6,353 individuals (702 women) in accessing justice. A total of 5,000 clients (89% women) suffering from various psychosocial issues received counseling services. The program offered 30-day free-of-cost pre-departure vocational skills training to 1,828 aspiring migrants (413 women) in various occupations. Likewise, 19,837 members from migrant households (97% women) participated in financial literacy classes, where they learned about maintaining income, expenses, savings-related records, and utilization of remittances.

SaMi supported the capacity building of government stakeholders at federal, provincial, and local levels to fulfill their responsibilities related to labor migration. At the federal level, the program supported MoLESS in drafting its five-year strategy, as well as reviewed and provided inputs on relevant documents, including bilateral labor agreements and memoranda of understanding with labor destinations, keeping the perspectives of migrant workers at the center.

At the provincial level, governments, facilitated by SaMi, are developing provincial labor and employment policies. Madhesh, Bagmati, and Gandaki provinces have already formulated and endorsed their policies, while others are in the drafting process. At the local level, SaMi supported local governments (LGs) in developing migration policies, safer migration guidelines, and strengthening labor and employment units. Due to the continued engagements of SaMi team members, Gandaki and Lumbini provinces established MRCs in non-SaMi districts namely Parbat, Myagdi, Gulmi, Palpa, and Arghakhanchi through inter-governmental collaboration between local and provincial governments. SaMi also facilitated the capacity building of police authorities, media persons, community leaders, and Returnee Migrants' Networks (RMNs) in program areas and collaborated with Employment Service Centers (ESCs) for information exchange and case referrals. In the coming year, SaMi will continue its support at all levels to develop policies, structures, and capacities for the delivery and sustainability of migration services, including expanding MRC services. However, this will be confirmed after the bilateral agreement between the governments of Nepal and Switzerland, which is in process.

In the year 2023, the ReMi project entered its second year of implementation, with significant achievements including strategic anchoring of the project at the provincial level, contributing to federal state building and allowing decentralized decision-making, such as selection of working municipalities,

and approval of annual government budgets and work plans. Within a short time, this has resulted in the respective provincial ministries taking ownership of the project, as demonstrated by budget allocation and expenditure for reintegration, interest in developing related policies and guidelines, and direct engagement in orientation events. A second achievement is the financial contributions made by provincial and local governments towards reintegration-related activities – 14 local governments allocated between NPR 0.6 to 2.0 million towards the topic, while the Koshi Province ministry allocated NPR 0.6 million and the Madhesh Province ministry allocated NPR 190 million (including the Chief Minister Employment Program). The project is now guiding budget expenditure while following up with remaining locations for their contributions and engagement. It has also made significant strides towards strengthening ESCs in 20 municipalities by facilitating staff recruitment and capacity building on social and economic reintegration activities, and the introduction of the ReMi case management process for the ESCs. This process will form the foundation of envisioned referral services and follow-up on social and economic reintegration support to returnee migrant workers.

In the country program budget for 2023, the Migration projects received an allocation of 28.00% of the total budget and the corresponding expenditure was 24.15%.

Case story: Ash Maya's journey from being rescued to enrolling in skill training

Ash Maya was beaten, ignored, blamed, and stigmatized at her home which compelled her to move back to her maternal place. She worked hard to maintain the marital knot of nine years. **“All my efforts went futile. I was forced to leave his house with my eight-year-old daughter and seek livelihood options,”** said Ash Maya BK, a resident of Byas Municipality, Tanahun.

It was then that one of her friends from social media, whom she did not even know well, approached her with a job offer at a cleaning company in Dubai. She believed him, paid NPR 150,000 (approximately USD 1,129), and flew to Dubai on August 22, 2022.

“I informed no one but my mother,” she said. **“But I did not get the job I was assured of. Rather, I landed up at a supply company and was forced to work as a domestic helper, that too only on a need basis.”** She expressed her disagreement and refused to go to work. This exposed her to mental and physical abuse from the people at the supply company. She contacted the **“agent”** who facilitated her visa through one of the recruiting agencies in Nepal. **But instead of helping, the “agent” threatened her to do whatever she was asked to.** Ash Maya sensed that she could die if she did not return home. She called her mother and explained her situation. Her mother rushed to the ward office as soon as she learned about her daughter's difficulties. The ward chairperson informed her about the SaMi Program that could facilitate bringing her daughter back. He introduced her to an Returnee Volunteer (RV) working in that ward. The RV took her to the MRC at the District Administration Office (DAO) in Tanahun to file a case on September 8, 2022.



Psychosocial counselor interacts with Ash Maya's mother during home visit.

The MRC registered the case at the DAO. Since the case was related to institutional cheating, the Chief District Officer CDO forwarded it to the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE). DoFE then asked People Forum, a national partner of SaMi, for further facilitation. People Forum called the representatives from the recruitment agency at the DoFE office for a **discussion with Ash Maya's mother. They signed an agreement to bring Ash Maya back home.** She reached Nepal on November 4, 2022, and was able to get back NPR 40,000 (approximately 300 USD) from the recruitment agency.

After her rescue, Ash Maya was provided with psychosocial counseling and referred to SaMi's free-of-cost skills training on housekeeping/cleaning. She completed her training in June 2023. “I have not given up on my wish to work abroad,” she said. **“Now that I have a training certificate in my hand, I am more hopeful.”**

In a conversation this January 2024, she said that she would not rush to go abroad this time. She is in regular touch with MRC to understand the **safer migration process**. **“Last time, the agent advised me to apply for the passport from Kathmandu directly instead of visiting the DAO here in Tanahun,” she said. “I had missed the opportunity to visit the MRC and gather information about the migration process. Now, I approach them whenever I have any query about migration.”** The skills training certificate helped her to get a job at a hotel in Pokhara. For now, she is busy earning bread and butter for her family.

Working Area: Skills, Jobs and Income

As access to basic education, vocational training, and income-generating opportunities is essential to lift communities out of poverty, Helvetas has long been engaging in the working area to create gainful employment and income opportunities for the poor. Except for the working field “Basic Education”, Helvetas Nepal is active in all working fields as described below:

Working Field: Vocational Skills

The high youth unemployment rate is a major development challenge in Nepal. Helvetas Nepal has been working to improve the employability of youths, especially those from disadvantaged groups, in the domestic and foreign labor market through market-led and inclusive Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). The federal, provincial and local governments implement the projects whereas Helvetas Nepal provides technical backstopping and capacity-building support to them to implement and institutionalize the vocational training.

The projects in this working field are as follows:

Project Name	Funding Source	Duration	Helvetas Role
Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment (ENSSURE) - I	SDC and GoN	July 2016 – July 2023	Advisory
Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment (ENSSURE) -II	SDC and GoN	Sep 2021 - July 2025	Advisory
SAMRIDDHI	IFAD	2018 – Dec 2022	Advisory
<i>Safer Migration (SaMi)</i>	<i>SDC and GoN</i>	<i>2018- July 2022</i>	<i>Advisory</i>

(Italics indicate projects straddling two or more working fields)

In 2023, a total of 3,200 youths enrolled in the pre-diploma level apprenticeship program (APT) and on-the-job training (OJT) within the ENSSURE program. Of these, 1,495 (46% women and 41% from disadvantaged groups) youths enrolled in the APT program, achieving 97% of the year's target. This enrollment rate is notable, especially when compared to the below 30% enrollment rate in other TVET programs in the country. Similarly, female participation in APT reached 46% due to extensive outreach activities and the addition of female-friendly occupations. Additionally, 693 youths (12% women, 16% disadvantaged groups) enrolled in OJT, achieving 42% of the year's target. However, enrollment in OJT was hindered by delays in training providers' procurement at local governments. Furthermore, 1,373 existing workers from various industries received skills upgrading training, including training on green competencies such as energy efficiency and EURO-6. Similarly, 1,080 youths who enrolled in training with OJT the previous year completed their training cycle. This training was provided in close collaboration with five partner industry associations, which contributed to the training cycle from participant selection to graduate placement. Additionally, 386 industries in eight occupations participated in the APT program, contributing CHF 590,343 as a stipend to apprentices. The TVET Sector Strategic Plan (TSSP) (2023-2032), approved by the Government of Nepal last year, includes the APT program as one of its major interventions. Similarly, provincial governments have begun allocating budgets for the APT program, and local governments have started allocating funds to support disadvantaged youths participating in the program. This is crucial for the institutionalization of the program.

Helvetas Nepal provided Technical Assistance (TA) to implement sub-component 1.3 (Decent Jobs) of the Rural Enterprises and Remittances Project (SAMRIDDHI). The project provided vocational skills training to 13,380 people in three categories. Specifically, 10,590 people received training to meet the demands of the urban labor market, 2,145 people received training for the commercialization of agriculture and local economic development, and 1,273 people received training in partnership with the local government. Altogether, 684 vocational training events were completed in the year 2023, covering 36

occupations in 13 sectors. Similarly, the project worked with 143 private industries for skills training and employment for 1,248 youths, leading to an apprenticeship model in Koshi and Madhesh provinces. Memorandum of understanding (MoUs) were signed with 12 local governments for collaboration, including cost-sharing for vocational skills training, which is important for the institutionalization of vocational skills training.

SaMi Project provided residential vocational skills training to 1,528 aspiring migrant workers in eight occupations. These included scaffolding, welding, shuttering carpentry, industrial electrician, plumbing, pipe fitting, garment machine operation, and housekeeping/cleaning. All participants in garment machine operation and housekeeping/cleaning training were women. Of the total trainees, 248 (all men) were provided with international certification on the Construction Industry Scaffolders Record Scheme (CISRS). Similarly, the Foreign Employment Board (FEB) provided vocational skills training to 10,258 individuals, including 2,441 women. The project team supported venue verification in the first phase of FEB training conducted by the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) technical schools and provided feedback to make the training effective. The project also provided monitoring and technical support for managing the Training Management Information System during both phases of training conducted by private training institutes. Additionally, the project developed the skills training curriculum for pipe fitters and revised the curriculum for garment machine operators.

Partnership with industry associations played a vital role in increasing industries' participation in the training cycle, improving TVET governance, and ensuring the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the training. However, there is a lack of legal frameworks and incentive mechanisms for private sectors to sustain their engagement in TVET. Public-private policy dialogues are crucial for pushing for legal frameworks and incentive mechanisms.

Sub-national governments are willing to deliver their TVET functions as endowed by the constitution of Nepal and are keen on partnering with development partners for vocational training. However, their capacity is limited due to the absence of supporting acts/laws and strategies, as well as a lack of human resources. Hence, governments need support to push for supporting acts/laws, develop TVET strategies, and establish longer-term plans. International recognition of the training is essential for increasing the employability of training graduates both domestically and internationally. Therefore, it should be considered while developing skills standards and designing and delivering training programs.

This year, the projects under the Vocational Skills working field represented 14.09% of the total country program budget and 15.13% of the expenditure.

Case story: Puran Chaudhary's Apprenticeship Journey and Contribution to the Green TEVT



Born into a low-class family in the rural setting of Khajura-3 Banke, Puran Chaudhary faced economic hardships from the beginning. His father, Barghar Tharu, worked as a mason, struggling to support a family of 4. In addition to Puran's endeavors, the family's main source of income came from working on the 10 kattas of leased land owned by a landlord.

Despite the financial constraints, Puran's academic journey continued up to 12th grade in management. However, the compelling need to contribute to the family income led him to explore various employment opportunities. He worked together with his father as a laborer in Mason, and sometimes he used to go **with his neighbor's brother and uncle to work as a laborer in the Electrical sector. Alongside that, he used to market groceries to contribute to his family's income.**

His turning point came when he learned about a free pre-diploma level electrical engineering apprenticeship program offered by Manmohan Memorial Polytechnic. This opportunity not only addressed Puran's financial constraints but also opened doors to formal education, inspiring his ambition to become a chief electrician.

Puran's experiences during the 3.5 months of institute-based learning and 19.5 months of industrial training were complemented by support from ENSSURE/Helvetas Nepal and the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) team. This backing helped him overcome challenges and complete four-semester examinations, setting his foundation in green TVET.

After completing the apprenticeship, Puran's employment journey included roles at Pashupati Synpack Sunsari, Kalanga Hydropower Bajhang, and Swasthani Electric Shop in Nepalganj. His dedication and expertise eventually led to his current position as chief technician at the GI Solar Plant, generating 6.8 megawatts of sustainable electricity. He got to know about this current job from his relative. Initially, he was recruited as a technician but after 1 year of recruitment, he became the chief technician in the company.

Beyond personal success, Puran's impact extends to environmental adaptation. The GI Solar Plant, generating 6.8 megawatts of electricity, stands as a lighthouse of sustainable energy. Puran's role in monitoring, maintaining, and overseeing the power delivery process demonstrates how an individual's journey through green Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) can contribute to both personal growth and environmental well-being. The plant stands as a beacon of sustainable energy, emphasizing the importance of investing in green TVET programs.

Puran's story highlights the transformative power of green skills in personal and professional growth. His journey from a challenging background to a leadership role in a sustainable energy industry underscores the potential for individuals from humble beginnings to become key players in environmentally conscious sectors, contributing not only to their success but also to the greater good. The emphasis on green TVET in Puran's story exemplifies its vital role in fostering a workforce dedicated to sustainable practices and the preservation of the environment.

Working Field: Private Sector Development

Helvetas attempts to create multiple partnerships and promotes policies that build sustainable business environments and foster inclusive economies that support decent job creation and entrepreneurship in micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, in farm and non-farm sectors.

The projects in this working field are as described below:

Project Name	Funding Source	Duration	Helvetas Role
InElam	<i>Public donations</i>	<i>2017- Dec 2020</i>	<i>Advisory</i>
<i>SAMRIDDDHI</i>	<i>IFAD</i>	<i>2018 – Dec 2022</i>	<i>Advisory</i>
<i>Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment (ENSSURE)- II</i>	<i>SDC and GoN</i>	<i>2021 - July 2025</i>	<i>Advisory</i>
<i>MITO (Strengthening Walnut Value Chain in Nepal)</i>	<i>Public donations, Happel Foundation</i>	<i>Jan. 2021 – Dec 2025</i>	<i>Project Management</i>

(Italics indicate projects straddling two or more working fields)

Helvetas Nepal engages, collaborates, and partners with the private sector in activities and initiatives aimed at fostering inclusive economic growth and creating sustainable livelihood opportunities to empower marginalized and disadvantaged groups. Additionally, it plays a facilitative role in promoting policies that foster a sustainable and inclusive business environment.

In 2023, some projects like InElam, SAMRIDDDHI, ENSSURE, MITO, and ReMi were strategically directed towards enterprise development, skills enhancement, improving business environments, and the productive use of remittances for fostering entrepreneurial endeavors, thereby contributing to sustainable economic growth. This year, Helvetas Nepal partnered with a total of 132 private sector organizations, benefiting over 12,000 individuals, with a focus on empowering disadvantaged groups.

In the year 2023, various projects of Helvetas forged partnerships with private sector associations. For example, the ENSSURE project collaborated with five private sector associations, including the NADA Automobiles Association of Nepal and the Hotel Association of Nepal. Efforts were made to sensitize these associations about the advantages of apprenticeship training and the importance of engaging with the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector. As a result of these collaborations, skill development units were established to foster cooperation between industry associations, member industries, and provincial and local governments, facilitating training and improving employability prospects for graduates.

Likewise, the MITO project maintained its collaboration with private nurseries to produce high-quality walnut saplings, contributing to the expansion of walnut cultivation and supporting local economies. **Under the SAMRIDDDHI Project's Leading to Apprenticeship (LAM) model, the project's Training and Employment Service Providers successfully collaborated with 143 industries for the placement of trainees.** The key takeaway was that LAM not only facilitated trainees' placement prospects but also provided the private sector and industries access to skilled human resources.

Similarly, the InElam project facilitated the establishment of 320 new businesses, with 40% of them initiated by women. Additionally, the project collaborated with three private sector associations, focusing on enhancing their capacity for policy advocacy to foster a more supportive business environment. For example, the project assisted the Banana Farmers Association in advocating for revisions to insurance policies, thereby addressing the challenges encountered by banana farmers and entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the project remained committed to exploring novel opportunities within the private sector, such as piloting localized technologies to stimulate employment opportunities in local communities.

The allocation for "Private Sector Development" projects in the annual country program budget accounted for 4.00% of the total budget, with the corresponding expenditure of 5.16%.

Case Story: From tradition to green innovation: painting a sustainable future

Inspired by the ancient practice of coating walls and floors with cow dung, green entrepreneurs have innovatively transformed it into an eco-friendly and cost-effective paint produced by processing cow dung. Unlike conventional paints that release harmful chemicals and volatile organic compounds, this eco-paint is non-toxic, odorless, and free from heavy metals. The scientifically treated cow dung serves as a natural deterrent against harmful microorganisms, giving the paint its anti-fungal and anti-bacterial properties. Additionally, the paint's coating helps regulate temperature, keeping interiors cooler in hot summers and warmer in colder months.



Helvetas' InElam project, which aims to facilitate local-resource-based enterprises, initially supported local entrepreneurs from Birgunj Sub-Metropolitan City to study and explore this idea in India. Following this exploration and intensive research and development, the joint efforts of Birgunj Nepal Business Consultancy and Husk Power Nepal Private Limited successfully localized this technology. By developing the treatment and production machinery locally in Nepal, they reduced expenses by one-third, significantly lowering the cost from NPR 17 lakhs to NPR 5 lakhs. This localization enhances the affordability of eco-paint, increasing its potential for replication and revolutionizing the paint industry through micro-entrepreneurs. By collecting cow dung from farmers, this initiative not only helps keep their surroundings clean but also provides a new income stream, allowing farmers to sell cow dung for up to NPR 8 per kilogram.

The inauguration of the eco-friendly paint manufacturing unit by Husk Power Nepal, in collaboration with Helvetas Nepal, took place on June 25th, 2023. Comprehensive laboratory tests have confirmed the absence of heavy metals and toxic chemicals in the paint. The next stage involves obtaining government certification, after which Husk Power Nepal can market the product and develop informational materials for aspiring entrepreneurs. The promotional price for the emulsion eco-paint is set at NPR 150 per liter, less than half the price charged by commercial paint companies. By offering a cost-effective option, more individuals and businesses can embrace sustainable alternatives, further driving the adoption of eco-friendly practices.

Gender and Social Equity

Gender and Social Equity (GSE) has been a cross-cutting theme for Helvetas Nepal at both institutional and operational levels. At these levels, Helvetas Nepal has adhered to all GSE principles and work approaches to ensure that no one is left behind in the process of inclusive and sustainable development. Women and disadvantaged groups (DAGs) are at the forefront of all project interventions to ensure transformative change.

In 2023, a total of 3,698,832 people were reached through all project interventions. The total female reach increased by 64% compared to the previous year. A significant majority of the target groups (both male and female), amounting to 62%, belong to disadvantaged groups. The impact and outreach in 2023 have been GSE-sensitive. GSE at the Development and Humanitarian Nexus was practiced as social protection

was necessary after the disastrous earthquake in Jajarkot district in November 2023, where multiple projects are ongoing. Helvetas Nepal, with the support of Swiss Solidarity, provided relief materials to the victims. About 95% of the total relief was distributed among disadvantaged groups. Women received sanitary pads, and washable sanitary cotton cloths were provided for menstrual needs. Families with lactating mothers were provided with diapers and warm clothes for the babies.

The project-specific GSE impact and achievements show that, through the TBSU project, 48% of female beneficiaries and a total of 60% of disadvantaged groups had access to markets, schools, and healthcare through the construction and rehabilitation of trail bridges. The RbF project has enabled 55% of female farmers and a total of 79% of disadvantaged farmers who report an increase in productivity or income by implementing sustainable agricultural practices. Through efficient water use promoted by the WASH projects, 49% of female farmers enhanced productivity and income, and in total, 59% of farmers are from disadvantaged groups. Likewise, 54% of female beneficiaries and a total of 49% of disadvantaged groups had additional income due to project interventions on private sector development through the MITO and InElam projects. Vocational education has been mainstreamed in many project interventions; through the ENSSURE project, 31% of female apprentices and students attended vocational education, with a total of 80% of apprentices and students coming from disadvantaged groups. Through the technical assistance of Helvetas Nepal, the SAMRIDDHI project completed vocational education training for 56% of female students, and in total, 92% of students who completed the training were from disadvantaged groups. Interventions in the SaMi project resulted in 28% of females achieving safer migration, and in total, **79% of migrants experienced safer migration this year. The PROYEL project's efforts led to the** formulation of a GESI policy in Hariwon Municipality of Madhesh Province, showcasing a strategic approach to embedding GSE principles in local government.

In terms of the three working areas, the highest outreach was achieved in the fields of Water, Food, and Climate, followed by Skill, Jobs and Income and finally Voice, Inclusion, and Cohesion.

Furthermore, solidarity for the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence was demonstrated. Helvetas **President Regula Rytz joined the program in solidarity with the theme "Unite! Invest to Prevent Violence Against Women & Girls"**. The Helvetas Nepal team and the president stood in solidarity to eliminate all forms of violence against women, with Youth Panel and Youth Sounding Board members from the PROYEL project. Youth engagement was crucial for solidarity as they are the key to preventing, mitigating, and responding to all forms of gender-based violence.

Despite these achievements, the participation of LGBTQI++ individuals and persons with disabilities (PWD) in the project interventions remained low this year. Additionally, workforce diversity at the institutional level has not increased above 30%, indicating that the workforce has not yet reached the stage of being GSE-sensitive according to the GSE marker. In 2024, Helvetas Nepal will continue to target women and DAGs as major target groups, mainstreaming the GSE strategy 2021-2024 at all levels by incorporating a transformative and systemic approach to overcome constraints.

Urban Engagement and Youth

In 2023, Helvetas Nepal expanded its involvement in urban areas in line with the objectives of SDG 11 and the Helvetas Global Strategy (2021-2024), encompassing all its working areas. This is particularly relevant in Nepal's context as the country is experiencing rapid urbanization, with a significant population shift from rural to peri-urban and urban areas. Through interventions in various working areas, it reached a total of 663,307 people in semi-urban and urban settings, of whom 450,681 belong to disadvantaged groups.

As part of the Urban Resilience Pilot in the Kathmandu Valley, a collaboration between Alliance 2015 partners, Helvetas Nepal, Welthunger Hilfe, and People in Need Nepal, the project targeted beneficiaries from informal squatter settlements and disadvantaged groups in urban settings. It provided advanced felt-making training to 45 women in Balaju and Godawari, enhancing their product creation skills and market connectivity. Additionally, the project offered comprehensive two-wheeler training to 20 females in Balaju, creating pathways to employment in logistics and the electric vehicle sectors, supported by Aloj Pvt. Ltd. and the A 2015 UR project, demonstrating a shared commitment to sustainability and women's empowerment. Participants of the two-wheeler electric bike training contributed 10% of the training costs,

Aloi Pvt. Ltd. contributed 40%, and the remaining 50% was supported by the A 2015 UR project, showcasing a collective commitment to promoting green initiatives and approaches.

Helvetas Nepal is committed to enhancing its impact by actively involving young people in its programs and projects, thereby capitalizing on opportunities for youth empowerment and engaging with local governance processes. Prioritizing the inclusion of young women and girls, individuals with disabilities, those from marginalized communities, historically excluded groups, indigenous populations, and those affected by disasters and conflicts, Helvetas Nepal ensures that its activities are inclusive and responsive to diverse needs.

Through initiatives such as PROYEL, ENSSURE, SAMRIDDHI, SaMi, ReMi, InElam, and earthquake response, Helvetas Nepal focuses on skill development, vocational training, career guidance, safer migration, and reintegration support for returning migrants, enterprise development, and disaster management. These initiatives engage with the governments and private sector at federal, provincial, and local levels to target and empower young people, recognizing the significant role they play in Nepal's demographic landscape. Nepal, with its demographic dividend, witnesses a significant portion of its youth migrating abroad in pursuit of economic opportunities or higher education.

In 2023, Helvetas Nepal collaborated with Helvetas Macedonia and Albania in a regional initiative to submit a proposal related to youth and economic opportunities to the Global Youth Economic Summit 2023 in Washington D.C. The joint proposal, which focused on providing career guidance to youth, was selected and presented at the summit.

Digitalization

In 2023, Helvetas Nepal made substantial progress in digitalization, focusing on enhancing operational efficiency and data management through a series of targeted initiatives. The organization successfully conducted technical training in Biratnagar and Pokhara, bolstering the digital competencies of staff in data collection, management, and visualization using tools like KoBo, PowerBi, and Quantum GIS. A significant leap was the introduction of a PowerApps-based Travel Management and Approval System, streamlining travel processes and integrating with a project-level Dashboard to monitor field mobility in near-real-time scenarios. At least two evidence-based monitoring systems have been developed for the InElam and AfnoGhar projects. Additionally, Helvetas Nepal developed PowerBi-based dashboards, providing real-time project insights ensuring public accessibility to Helvetas Nepal coverage and showing the project density. The organization also achieved a significant milestone by migrating the monitoring systems of the Trail Bridge Program to the Government of Nepal domain, marking the program's successful phase-out and ensuring the sustainability of its digital initiatives. These concerted efforts in digitalization exemplify Helvetas Nepal's commitment to adopting innovative solutions, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, and enhancing decision-making processes.

Humanitarian Response

Nepal, characterized by challenging topography and climatic conditions, is highly susceptible to various disasters, including earthquakes, landslides, floods, and droughts. Recognizing the critical need for preparedness, Helvetas Nepal collaborated with Alliance-15 partners to formulate a joint emergency preparedness and response plan. Additionally, the organization finalized Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for expedited procurement during emergency responses. In a broader effort to enhance disaster resilience, Helvetas Nepal aims to reinforce Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) measures within its ongoing projects.

In 2023, due to the relatively low occurrence of COVID-19 cases in Nepal, there was no significant need for specific COVID-19 response activities. The country's relatively lower infection rates and effective containment measures contributed to minimizing the pandemic's impact on the population. However, a significant outbreak of dengue fever across various provinces placed pressure on the healthcare system and posed a considerable public health challenge. The outbreak, with around 52,000 cases and 20 confirmed deaths, was reported in all districts, with the largest proportion of cases reported in Koshi, followed by Gandaki and Bagmati provinces.

Natural disasters, including floods, landslides, and earthquakes, marked the year. Monsoon-triggered landslides and floods caused casualties, while earthquakes in the Sudurpashim and Karnali provinces resulted in significant loss of lives and properties. On November 3, 2023, a devastating earthquake measuring 6.4 magnitude struck Jajarkot and Rukum West districts, resulting in 157 deaths, over 350 injuries, and extensive damage to homes and buildings. Responding swiftly, Alliance 2015, comprising Helvetas, People in Need, and Welthunger Hilfe, carried out emergency responses in affected areas, providing hygiene kits, food parcels, warm clothes, tarpaulins, Pi-foam, and blankets to affected communities in Bheri Municipality and Barekot Rural Municipality. However, Jajarkot and Rukum West, being relatively poorer districts, faced challenges in reconstruction efforts, leading to cold-related fatalities among affected populations.

Anticipating the approaching winter season, Helvetas Nepal identified an urgent need for winterization support to enhance living conditions for affected communities in Jajarkot and Rukum West. Consequently, the organization initiated the "Winterization Support to Earthquake-Affected People in Karnali" project, funded by Swiss Solidarity. This project, starting in November 2023 for four months, aims to enable earthquake-affected populations to survive and recover with dignity. Through the distribution of winterization kits, including sleeping mattresses, Pi-foam floor mattresses, blankets, and double-layer tents, the project targets to assist 1,350 affected households in Jajarkot and Rukum West.



Distribution of the winterization supports in Barekot Rural Municipality, Jajarkot

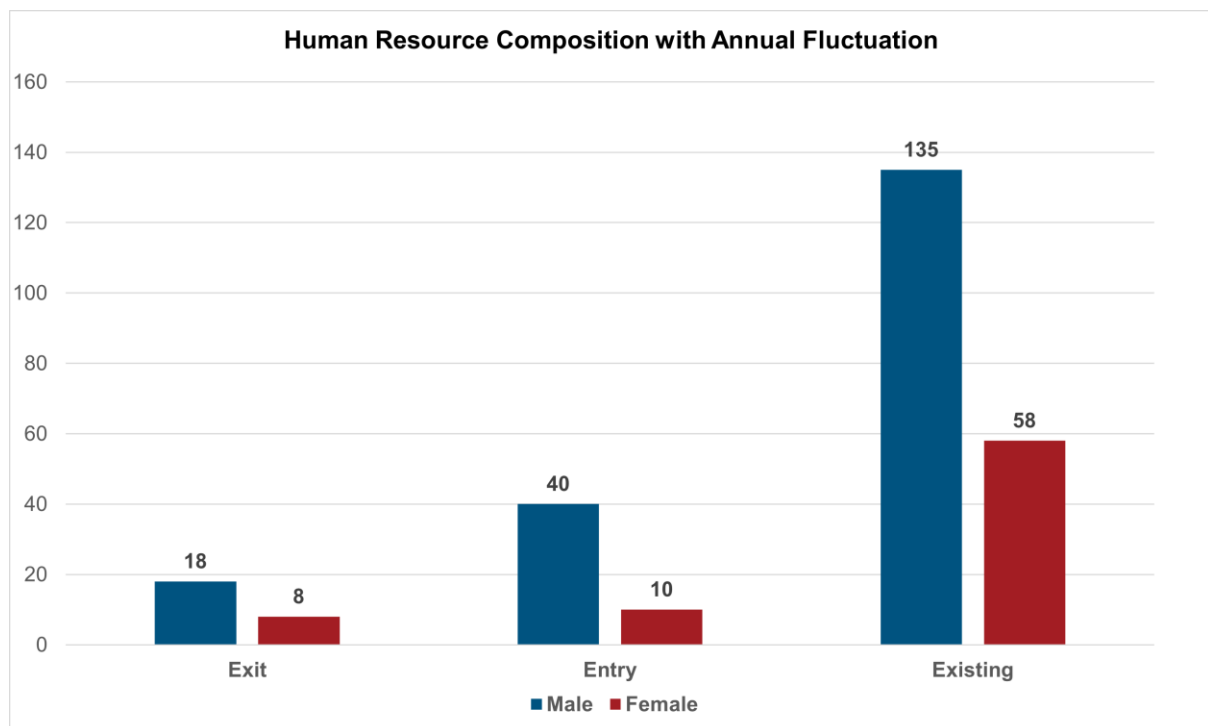
Furthermore, Helvetas Nepal is set to implement the "Skill and Reconstruction Project," supported financially by SDC Nepal, to facilitate recovery and reconstruction efforts in earthquake-affected areas. This project aims to restore education and health infrastructures and train masons in earthquake-resilient technologies.

Among the main achievements of these humanitarian response activities were the timely delivery of aid to affected communities, the successful implementation of emergency relief projects, and the establishment of effective coordination mechanisms with relevant stakeholders. Valuable lessons were learned, emphasizing the importance of robust disaster preparedness measures, community engagement, and flexible approaches to address humanitarian challenges. Overall, Helvetas Nepal's response activities stress its commitment to supporting vulnerable populations and building resilient communities.

Human Resources

Helvetas Nepal had a total of 193 employees as of December 2023, with 30% being women, representing a 2% increase compared to the previous year. In 2023, Helvetas Nepal recruited 26 new employees (31% women) for new projects such as Afno Ghar and Winterization Support for Earthquake-affected Populations in Karnali, as well as to fill vacant positions in ongoing projects. However, with 50 employees separating in 2023, including 37 due to the successful completion of the Trail Bridge Support Unit project, retention and talent management remained key challenges.

Helvetas Nepal organized various strategic and important capacity development activities to strengthen the organization's systems and enhance employees' competencies. These included hosting different global/regional workshops such as a Global HR workshop in March 2023, a Joint Reflection Workshop on Partnerships & Capacity Development for Sustained Impact in August 2023, and Skills, Jobs, and Income in December 2023. Additionally, various in-house trainings and workshops were organized on topics such as Public Procurement and Contract Management, Knowledge Management, Travel Management and Leave Management Systems, Defensive Driving and Safe Driving, and Staff Safety and Security. A two-day Training of Trainers on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment was conducted with an external resource person in January 2023. Moreover, a Community of Practice for the Federal State Building was established to promote learning and information exchange among different projects. Helvetas Nepal has continued to provide traineeship opportunities for young people from disadvantaged groups. In 2024, Helvetas Nepal plans to organize a We@Helvetas workshop to provide consistent and detailed information regarding the organizational strategy, mission, vision, values, and principles, as well as transversal themes, working approaches, and competencies to its employees.



Personal Story

A Journey of Service and Artistic Pursuits with Helvetas Nepal : Gopal Dangol



After completing my bachelor's degree, I left my hometown to work with a consulting firm outside the valley. In August 1995, I joined Helvetas Nepal in Butwal as a Senior Secretary for the Pilot Labour-based District Roads Rehabilitation and Maintenance Project (PLRP). During this time, I taught myself Microsoft Windows and impressed the organization with my dedication and skills.

My journey with Helvetas Nepal continued with the Employment Fund for Youth (EFY), where I joined as an IT & Logistics Officer in June 2009. The EFY was a transformative project, providing short-term training to over 100,000 youths between 2008 and 2014. It was also the first project to construct earthquake-resilient houses in Dolakha after the April 2015 earthquake, successfully building over 1,000 houses in 14 affected districts. This project was one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life, and I also served as the security focal person, coordinating the rescue of staff during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Working at the Employment Fund was a rich experience in many ways. Our diverse team performed a historic group dance celebrating the 60th anniversary of Helvetas Nepal, and I received first prize for reciting a poem on the 60-year journey of Helvetas Nepal. The EF also celebrated International Women's Day with dance, drama, and poetry recitals, where I actively participated and became known as an artist. I even won first place twice in the 'Inter-project poster competition' organized by Helvetas Nepal, becoming a star in the organization.

My tenure at Helvetas Nepal was marked by hard work, artistic expression, and immense satisfaction from achieving project goals. Helvetas Nepal not only shaped my professional career but also introduced me to the joy of artistic pursuits. Besides, I served as the Secretary for the Personnels Representative Group (PRG) of Helvetas Nepal, where our executive team performed satisfactory activities during 2021-2023.

Though my journey with different mandatory projects of Helvetas Nepal where we implement the project directly, I transitioned to the 'Samriddhi' project where Helvetas provided technical assistance to one of the sub-components. Despite being just a sub-component, the SAMRIDDHI project managed a substantial budget and successfully trained 30,000 youths, marking it as a notable success. As the project nears its end, and with staff downsizing underway, I am among those being let go.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to all my colleagues, team leaders, country office staff, and the five country directors I had the pleasure of working with. I truly enjoyed my journey with all of you.

Budget and Investment

The approved budget for 2023 was CHF 13.62 million, marking an increase from the 2022 budget of CHF 10.76 million. However, the utilization of the budget continued to be on the lower side, with only 77% of the total budget being utilized.

The budget utilization ratio segregated by working field is given in the table below:

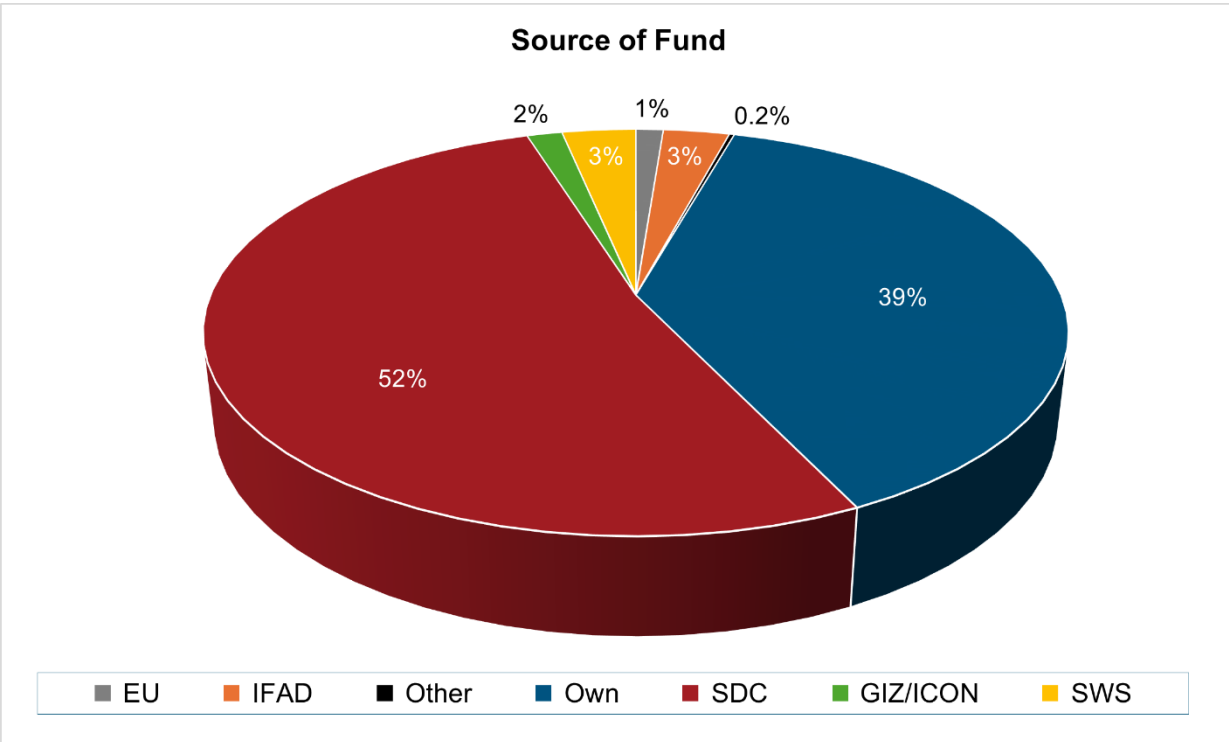
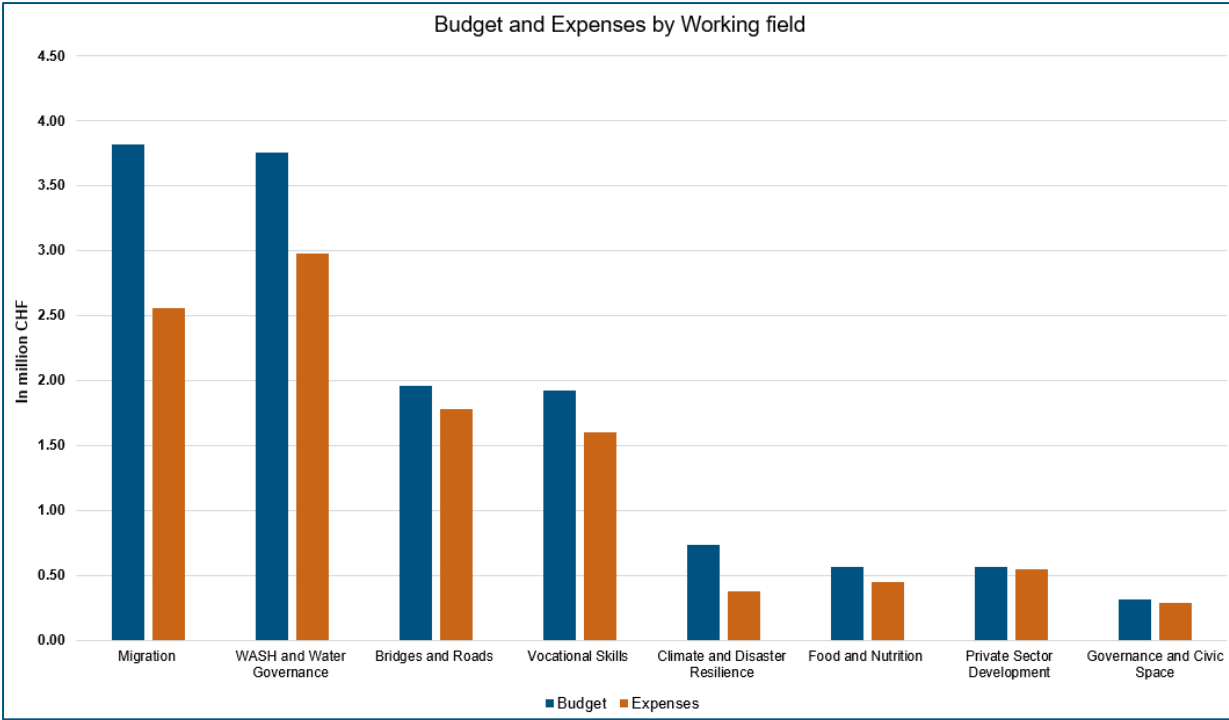
Working Field	Budget	% of Budget	Expenses	% of Expenses	Variation	Variation %
Water, Food and Climate						
WASH and Water Governance	3,757,915	27.59	2,981,546	28.24	776,369	20.66
Food and Nutrition	561,812	4.12	451,371	4.28	110,441	19.66
Bridges and Roads	1,957,245	14.37	1,783,027	16.89	174,217	8.90
Climate and Disaster Resilience	735,222	5.40	379,322	3.59	355,900	48.41
Voice, Inclusion and Cohesion						
Governance and Civic Space	312,679	2.30	285,426	2.70	27,253	8.72
Migration	3,814,177	28.00	2,530,565	23.97	1,283,612	33.65
Skills, Jobs and Income						
Vocational Skills	1,919,372	14.09	1,599,845	15.15	319,527	16.65
Private Sector Development	561,759	4.12	547,138	5.18	14,621	2.60
Total	13,620,181		10,583,979		3,036,202	22.48

The major issue in terms of budget utilization is in the working field of "Migration." The newly initiated project "Reintegration of Returnee Migrants" could not gain momentum, primarily due to delays in the selection of local governments and subsequent delays in fund transfers through the Government of Nepal Federal Treasury. Similarly, progress in earthquake response projects in Western Nepal did not proceed as planned. The planned transition of procurement from project offices to community procurement was also delayed, resulting in lower budget utilization in the working field of "WASH and Water Governance."

The increase in funding volume from charity: water contributed to the rise in the annual budget volume compared to 2022. The approved budget for 2024 has further increased and is expected to reach CHF 14 million with two new SDC mandates, remaining at a similar volume for the next three years.

The annual audit for 2023 is currently underway, and for projects where the audit is completed, there have been no reports of major control weaknesses or material issues, consistent with previous years. The auditors have generally commended the robust systems in place.

The organization is making efforts to enhance the internal control system throughout the organization. Various new initiatives have been launched, including the expansion of Compliance Control Self-Assessment (CCSA) into projects and enhancing Internal Control System missions. The Nepal office has actively participated in these initiatives.



Audit Report

CSC & Co

Chartered Accountants

Mahamati Bhawan
175, Gairidhara Marg, Gairidhara
PO Box: 4861, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: +977-1-4004580, 4004581, 4004582
Fax: +977-1-4004578
E-mail: csc@cscnepal.com
Web: www.cscnepal.com

Independent auditor's report on financial information

**HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation,
Maulbeerstrasse 10, 3001 Berne, Switzerland**

Opinion

Based on the FDFA's Terms of Reference, we have audited the financial information of the Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation Nepal, which comprises the following financial information:

- the balance sheet as at 31st December 2023 and the statement of income and expenditure for the year, starting on 1st January 2023 and ending on 31st December 2023,
- a breakdown of budget vs expenditure by project, and
- the notes (including schedules) to the financial information including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial information on Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation Nepal for the year ended 31st December 2023 have been prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with the accounting policies described in the notes and comply with the requirements of the FDFA's Terms of Reference dated 18.03.2022.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). Our responsibilities under those provisions and standards are further described in the "Auditor's Responsibilities for the audit of the financial information" section of our report.

We are independent of the entity in accordance with the requirements of the IESBA Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of matter

We draw attention to Note 3 to the financial information, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial information is prepared to provide information in connection with the audit of financial information of the HELVETAS Swiss Inter-cooperation, Switzerland. As a result, the statement may not be suitable for another purpose. Our audit opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Management's Responsibility for the financial information

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial information. This responsibility includes designing, implementing and maintaining internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial information that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies, and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.



Auditor's Responsibilities for the audit of the financial information

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial information as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial information.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial information, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by Management.



 Bikesh Madhikarmi
 Partner

Date: 28 March 2024
 Place: Kathmandu, Nepal


UDIN: 240329CA01391RNvfH


Annex: Financial Information (including notes and expenditure per project), Questionnaire, Management Letter.


HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Nepal				
BALANCE SHEET				
As at December 31, 2023				
				Currency (NPR)
Account Group	Description	Reference/ Schedule Numbers	2023	2022
ASSETS				
1000	Cash in hand	1	169,395	217,208
1100	Cash at Bank	2	169,155,739	96,069,652
1400	Advances	3	189,920,319	63,369,389
1500	Deposits	4	28,534,789	25,769,289
Total Assets			387,780,242	185,425,538
CAPITAL & LIABILITIES				
2000	Current Liabilities	5	75,031,366	39,577,957
2010	Statutory Liabilities		1,128,653	1,011,427
2020	Staff Liabilities		32,321,796	28,405,844
2030	Other Current Liabilities		5,747,656	9,952,686
2040	Program Creditors		35,833,261	208,000
Fund Balance				
2100	CAPITAL HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, Head Office, Switzerland		312,748,876	145,847,581
Total Liabilities			387,780,242	185,425,538


The annexed notes/ schedules form an integral part of this Balance Sheet

As per our report of the even date



 Prajya Adhikari
 Head of Finance and Administration


 Dr. Prabin Manandhar
 Country Director


 Bikesh Madhikari
 Partner
 CSC & Co.
 Chartered Accountants




Place: Bakhundole, Lalitpur
 Date: 28 March 2024





HELLETAS Swiss Intercooperation Nepal Statement of Income and Expenditure For the Year 2023: 1 st January to 31 st December 2023				
				Currency (NPR)
Account Group	Description	Reference/ Schedule Numbers	2023	2022
Income:				
9000	Remittances / Grant receipts			
	Remittances from Head Office	6	1,568,849,300	1,054,025,012
	Remittances from local donors	7	77,811,550	73,111,670
	Total Receipts		1,646,660,850	1,127,136,682
EXPENDITURE				
51	Personnel costs Expatriates		408,900	889,624
5130	Expatriates Recruitment costs		-	-
5140	Expatriates HRD costs		-	-
5150	Expatriate Travelling and Representation		357,120	776,324
5151	Expatriate Homeleave & Transfer Costs		-	46,112
5160	Expatriate Foreign residence costs		-	-
5169	Other Expatriation costs		51,780	67,188
52	Personnel costs Nationals		509,677,786	442,552,039
5200	Personnel Cost Nationals		449,317,787	400,172,075
5250	Travel & Representation costs National Staff		60,359,999	42,379,965
54	Local Consultants		19,926,304	11,427,948
5400	National Consultants fees		17,923,750	9,910,232
5450	National Consultants Travel & Repr. Costs		2,002,554	1,517,716
71	Operating Cost		101,591,599	81,407,634
7110	Vehicles		32,914,455	22,250,887
7120	Office costs		62,551,400	53,370,000
7150	Other operating costs		6,125,744	5,786,748
72	Project Costs International		825,944,238	666,347,435
7210	Education and Training costs		153,068,463	142,237,896
7220	Investment and Equipment costs		55,760	1,455,372
7231	Contribution to NGO		181,959,095	120,348,810
7232	Contribution to Govt Authorities		16,857,531	277,370
7233	Contribution to Private Sector		141,226,884	99,107,633
7234	Contribution to Beneficiaries		286,211,031	273,078,642
7239	Various contribution to Partners		46,565,474	29,841,712
	Total Expenditure		1,457,548,827	1,202,624,682
Other Receipts:				
8200	Bank Interest		-	-
	Surplus/(Deficit)		189,112,023	(75,488,000)


The annexed notes/ schedules form an integral part of this Statement of Income and Expenditure.

As per our report of the even date


Pragya Adhikari
Head of Finance and Administration


Dr. Prabin Manandhar
Country Director


Bikesh Madhikarmi
Partner
CSC & Co.
Chartered Accountants



Place: Bakhundole, Lalitpur
Date: 28 March 2024

Ways Forward

Nepal's political stability depends on strengthening democratic institutions and resolving power struggles among political parties. Constitutional reforms, especially regarding federalism and governance, will shape the political landscape. Nepal needs to prioritize economic diversification to reduce dependence on sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and remittances. This involves promoting industrialization, investing in infrastructure, supporting SMEs, developing agriculture and agro-processing, expanding tourism options, fostering innovation and technology, enhancing trade and regional connections, and investing in human capital. Gender equality social inclusion, and environmental sustainability are also key for stability and resilience.

Projects across various sectors are progressing effectively, benefiting target beneficiary groups and supporting the Federal State Building by establishing institutional frameworks aligned with the Constitution. Helvetas Nepal responded to the Jajarkot earthquake with relief efforts and has continued to support recovery and reconstruction using a nexus approach. Helvetas Nepal stresses the importance of multi-stakeholder consultation throughout the project lifecycle, emphasizing coordination and synergy among stakeholders. Its inclusive approach engages the government, civil society, and private sector, aiming for systemic change.

Helvetas Nepal will be selective in supporting areas under the ongoing country operational priorities, with some flexibility given the dynamic country context, based on country demand, resource availability, our experience, and complementarity with the support of other development partners. Helvetas Nepal will increase engagement in rural-urban linkages, strengthen work with youth significantly, improve climate action, reinforce the humanitarian-development nexus, and leverage the digital transformation in line with the Helvetas global strategy. Helvetas Nepal will further strengthen its partnership with SDC, explore consortium with the private sector, build local capacities and reinforce advisory support and policy advocacy.

Considering the opportunities, challenges, and priorities, Helvetas Nepal will focus on the following three areas:

Quality Programming

- Improving monitoring systems for both program and financing aspects
- Expanding and diversifying acquisition efforts
- Fostering a culture of learning and knowledge sharing within and beyond the organization
- Developing a new Country Strategy (2025-28) aligned with the Helvetas Global Strategy

System and Compliances

- Enhancing internal controls and ensuring compliance with established policies and regulations to mitigate risks and improve operational efficiency.
- Risk assessments, training and awareness, internal audits, management oversight, grievance handling and continuous improvement.
- Strengthening due diligence within partnerships and advancing capacity development
- Establishing effective procurement plans and processes

People and Culture

- Cultivating a supportive and inclusive work environment
- Reinforcing We@Helvetas
- Recruiting young and local talent

Thanks

We sincerely appreciate the diverse entities that contribute to the fulfillment of our collective mission. This encompasses various government agencies, donors, international implementation partners, national non-governmental partners, and local implementation partners. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all those who consistently support us in achieving our desired outcomes and outputs. Additionally, we wish to express our deep gratitude to the individual local resource persons, cooperatives, users' committees, experienced leader farmers, and consultants. Their invaluable support and services have been crucial to our efforts, and we are truly grateful for their contributions.