

ANNUAL REPORT

2023



HELVETAS



**WHAT  
MAKES THE UNHEARD,  
HEARD?**

**Our vision is a just world in which all men and women determine the course of their lives in dignity and security, using environmental resources in a sustainable manner.**

**“To anyone who thinks that women are worth less than men, I prove them wrong – and that feels good.”**



Tsehay Mengistu,  
newly trained welder, Ethiopia

**“I have a mother’s heart. A better future for my children means a better future for me too.”**



Subadhra Timalsina,  
Kuwaha producer, Nepal

**“Our forest garden is two years old now. After just three months, I was able to harvest corn and after six months, papaya, both to eat and to sell. We never ate such a healthy and varied diet before.”**



Jorge Ribera,  
farmer and nurse, Bolivia

**Decision-makers often do not hear the voices of minorities. A strong civil society stands up for the concerns and rights of these minorities. Strengthening these voices strengthens social cohesion, political participation and democratic control.**



Council assembly in Wotet Abay, Ethiopia

Cover photograph: Tahmina Khatun, 30, from Bangladesh, explains what women expect and want.



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# DEVELOPMENT NEEDS RELIABLE PARTNERS

**We see wars, conflicts, the climate crisis and authoritarian tendencies everywhere we look. But away from the spotlight, at Helvetas we also see encouraging developments, for example, when women courageously raise their voices to demand rights for minorities.**

### Right now!

Every year I visit one of our partner countries. Recently, I was in Nepal, where Helvetas launched its first projects over 60 years ago. I was impressed by the trail bridge program, which Switzerland financed and implemented with the help of local experts. It has changed the lives of 20 million people. Schoolchildren, farmers and midwives can now avoid dangerous paths and river crossings by using more than 10,000 of these bridges (p.12). Today, the Nepalese government is carrying forward this initiative on its own, and Helvetas can focus on new projects, such as supporting the authorities in building a federal democracy. I have seen how important long-term partnerships are, especially now, in times of multiple crises. To strengthen civil society and create prospects in low-income countries, you need reliable development cooperation. The Swiss people know this, and regularly express their support for more funding in surveys. It is up to all of us to take this message to the Federal Parliament so that Switzerland can continue to take responsibility in the future. Thank you for your tireless support, which we don't take for granted and greatly appreciate.

*Regula Rytz, President*



Melchior Lengsfeld, Executive Director, and Regula Rytz, President of Helvetas

### Long-term perspectives

2023 was a very difficult year for too many people around the world, and not just because of wars and conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, Congo, Sudan and in the Sahel. Climate change and economic crises also made life difficult for many families. I am therefore all the more grateful that, despite these circumstances, Helvetas and our partner organizations were able last year to support millions of people on their path out of poverty. At the same time, we are very concerned about the increasing number of demands being placed on development cooperation. Originally conceived to combat poverty and improve living conditions, it is now also supposed to alleviate the consequences of climate change and immediate hardship, as well as

pay for reconstruction in Ukraine. These are all essential, but such short-term needs cannot come at the expense of long-term, stabilizing development cooperation. Long-term, comprehensive support is needed to find a way out of the current polycrisis, to prevent future crises and to create viable alternatives on the ground. All the more reason for us to thank our funding partners and donors for their committed support to creating fair opportunities worldwide, and with that, the basis for a peaceful coexistence.

*Melchior Lengsfeld, Executive Director*

In rural areas of Benin, menstruation is a taboo subject shrouded in beliefs and prejudices. Girls often don't understand what is happening to them when they get their first period. They're afraid, and they dare not talk about it at home. Helvetas works with courageous women who confront this subject in schools so that everyone, girls and boys alike, learns to see the menstrual cycle as something natural. Gender-separated toilets help girls to meet their needs without being scrutinized. The beginning of the end of a taboo.

© Simon B. Opladen



**WHY  
CAN COMBATING  
TABOOS BE  
THE LIFEblood  
OF PROGRESS?**

# RECLAIMING THE SPACE TO ACT

**The intimidation of environmental activists, the violent dispersal of demonstrations, the death penalty for homosexuality, accusations of money laundering and arbitrary lawsuits against NGOs are alarm signals: The ability of civil society to act freely is under threat and must be protected.**

“Fear and suspicion and hate – these are the values that are being injected into the society. Mistrust is growing,” said Rajagopal P.V., founder of the Indian grassroots movement Ekta Parishad, at the Helvetas Fall 2023 Symposium on civil society’s shrinking space and ability to act freely in the face of authoritarian power structures. What can we do about it? “If properly organized, we can recreate our space and create a history for the future,” says Rajagopal P.V. Solutions can only come “from the bottom, not from the top.” He added, “Never underestimate the power of the poor.”

Only 2 percent of the world’s population lives in countries where civil society is able to engage for democracy and justice without danger. In contrast, 31 percent of humanity is completely denied this, 40 percent face repression and 15 percent face obstructions in trying to do so. 12 percent live in a country with a narrowed civic space. This has dramatic consequences, because democracies are only viable in the long term if the state, the private sector and civil society can participate in public debates on an equal footing.

**The United Nations Human Rights Council** In many countries, it is hard for NGOs to engage the government directly on sensitive issues. The UN Human Rights Council in Geneva offers a way out of this predicament. Here, even small NGOs can present their legitimate concerns for discussion in a protected setting. The respective government must then adopt a position and take appropriate measures. Helvetas has been supporting partner organizations in this process for several years with joint reports and targeted advocacy. Many important issues have been addressed in this way in recent years, such as the right to clean drinking water, education and decent working conditions. Ideally, this opens up new opportunities for a constructive dialogue between the state and civil society.

Whether or not we are free to express our concerns publicly depends on where we are born. Switzerland’s direct democracy, with its substantive votes and elections, gives Swiss citizens many opportunities to express themselves on issues of public interest, and to negotiate and help make decisions.

## Approaching Code Red worldwide

On every project, Helvetas works with civil society partner organizations and strengthens these in a targeted manner. But in many partner countries, the stoplight symbol used by Civicus (an international NGO network for the protection of civil rights) to gauge the state of civil society is glowing dark orange to red. In many places, political and economic elites resent when civil society asks critical questions and insists on the rule of law and justice. As a result, many NGOs operate in political environments where freedom of association, assembly and expression are at times severely restricted.

Many of these restrictions are insidious: a threat here and regulatory obstacles there, including hurdles for the registration of NGOs, extremely strict requirements for financial reporting, a ban on foreign funding and accusations of being an agent for a foreign country. Active citizens and journalists are being intimidated, watched, persecuted and arrested. The media are being censored. According to the organization Reporters Without Borders a total of 521 media professionals across the globe were arbitrarily detained in 2023.

Restrictions can also become violent when demonstrations are broken up or human rights advocates and environmentalists are killed. Elections are also a sensitive moment for democracies when opposition activists, journalists and dissidents are legally persecuted or otherwise intimidated and excluded from elections. With the resurgence of authoritarian regimes and criminal gangs, a well-known, dangerous pattern of repression of civil society is spreading across the world.



© Patrick Rohr

Journalism training in Bhutan. Media diversity is one of the benchmarks of a civil society’s ability to act freely.

Nationalism, populism, conservatism and fundamentalism are once again making it socially acceptable to intimidate dissenters, minorities and foreigners and their organizations – and not just in countries with authoritarian regimes. Restrictions are often embedded in legislation with the monitoring, punishment and banning of civil society organizations, for example under the guise of fighting terrorism.

## The strength of networking

For Agnieszka Kroskowska, leader of Helvetas’ Voice, Inclusion and Cohesion team and an expert in gender and social justice, the key to reopening a space for engagement in civil society resides in local, regional, national and international networking. This involves seeking allies not only among like-minded people, but also in government, the scientific community and the private sector. “This is how we spread the risks and, at the same time, increase our strengths and influence exponentially.”

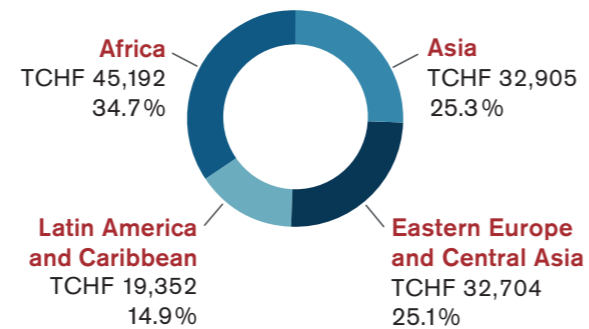
Civil society plays a pivotal role in development cooperation when it comes to social balance and political control, as well as the quality assurance of projects and partnerships. Locally organized and committed people are the ones to point out weaknesses in the political, social and economic system. They are able to voice the concerns of minorities. They negotiate rights and obligations with decision-makers. When the state and the business world refuse to engage with civil society, there is a lack of fair opportunities for the powerless and disadvantaged in a society. This is why Helvetas makes a deliberate effort to protect and, where possible, expand civil society’s ability to act freely, as many examples in this annual report show.

# FAIR OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERYONE

Helvetas works with and for people living in poverty. We work in countries that are among the poorest in the world as well as in middle-income countries and in fragile, insecure regions. Because our experience shows that sustainable development takes time, we are committed to the long-term effort of creating fair opportunities for all.



PROGRAM EXPENDITURE



**Every single person counts**

For each of our 280 projects\*, Helvetas collects annual data on how many women and men have directly benefited from improvements such as vocational training courses, new water connections or safer migration, and how many organizations and institutions have been strengthened. In addition, there were emergency response projects in Syria and Morocco carried out by Alliance2015 partners with a total of 12,230 people supported.

The figures reflect the situation as of December 31, 2023. \*Due to new counting method, this figure is not comparable with previous years.

# 10,000 TRAIL BRIDGES IN NEPAL

**In Nepal, suspension bridges improve access to education, markets and healthcare for millions of people. They give women, men and children fair opportunities and prospects. The 10,000<sup>th</sup> bridge was inaugurated in November 2023. This is a success story in which Helvetas has played a part, and which continues in a new form.**

Nepal has a very rugged topography with over 6,000 streams and rivers, such as the Melamchi River. During the rainy season, it carries so much water that Dawa Chirring and his fellow students can no longer cross it. “We lived separately from our families in a hostel near the school for several months at a time,” says the 15-year-old. Now a suspension bridge connects the two banks of the Melamchi. Gone are the days of long walks for Dawa and many others who want to sell their vegetables at the market, collect a document from a government office, or see a doctor.

Over the past six decades, 10,000 trail bridges have been built in Nepal. They have eliminated the need for dangerous, and sometimes fatal, river crossings. The travel time of one million people has been reduced by an average of 2.1 hours per day. Some 20 million Nepalese people have been able to improve their living conditions: There is a 17 percent reduction in the cost of food, agricultural production has increased by 10 percent and house hold income by 22 percent. After a new trail bridge is built, an average of 8.5 percent more children attend school and visits to health centers rise by 31 percent. One in five bridges brings the opening of new stores, food stalls and workshops.

## Local professionals take over

The suspension bridges date back to an initiative launched by Helvetas that has been financed and jointly developed since the early 1960s by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The approach has evolved considerably over the years. At first, Helvetas and SDC carried out the construction projects themselves. They planned each bridge individually and the construction teams lived close to the building site for months.

To put the bridges into quasi-mass production, local specialists trained by Helvetas on the technical requirements took over the responsibility for bridge construction in 1989. Bridge design was standardized, making it more cost-efficient, and the bridges are

## Localization: challenging power relations

Localization challenges traditional concepts and approaches to development cooperation, questions unequal power structures and seeks to jointly shape economic and trade relations in a fair way. The power to define and decide on progress, “development” and sustainable policies should lie in the hands of the people who live in the countries of the Global South. To achieve this, both international NGOs and their national partner organizations, as well as donors are called upon to realign partnerships with a view to equal cooperation. The private sector can also contribute to this with resources and expertise for locally managed development. At a time when civil society’s space is shrinking and its ability to act freely is being restricted (p. 8), a close and complementary cooperation with national NGOs in the Global South is all the more essential for credibly combating global and local injustices. Helvetas has principles and guidelines for partnerships that are carefully adapted to each context.

now managed locally. This approach fosters local responsibility and ownership, since an operation and maintenance committee that includes future bridge users is formed prior to its construction. It is crucial that women and representatives of ethnic minorities are involved so that they can voice their needs. Before, some 50 bridges were built per year. The average rose to about 150 bridges per year.

All of these elements were incorporated into the Nepalese government’s national bridge strategy in 2006, under which no one in the country should have to make a detour of more than an hour to access government services. The bridge design has been continuously optimized, including being widened so that bicycles and motorcycles can be pushed across them. The number of completed bridges in Nepal increases significantly every year. In 2023, local experts, working together with the neighboring



© Narendra Shrestha

Suspension bridges not only shorten distances, they also empower women and minorities, who are represented on every bridge committee.

villages and under the supervision of local committees, built 740 suspension bridges – including the country’s 10,000<sup>th</sup> trail bridge, which was officially inaugurated in November 2023.

**1,562,146**  
people have shorter distances to travel and more time, thanks to new bridges and roads built in 2023

As part of the introduction of Nepal’s federal constitution in 2015, Helvetas supported the government in distributing responsibility for bridge construction across the three levels of government – federal, provincial and municipal – and in involving the citizenry. As a result, the once purely technical approach of the bridge program has been expanded to include aspects of civic participation and good governance.

## A South-South exchange

Nepalese authorities today have the resources and technical knowledge to continue the program on their own. In early 2024, the Nepalese government took over all aspects of bridge construction, from planning to financing, construction and maintenance.

And the bridges have set an example worldwide: Nepalese experts who gained experience in Helvetas’ trail bridge program are now sharing their knowledge with engineers in other countries that face similar topographical challenges as Nepal, as part of a “South-South” cooperation. Since 2009, 150 suspension bridges based on the Nepalese model have been built or are in the planning stage in Ethiopia, Burundi, Tanzania, Mozambique, Indonesia, Bhutan, Laos and Vietnam.

# WHAT MAKES DUMP SITES BLOOM AGAIN?



Sucre, the constitutional capital of Bolivia, is growing, but its water supply depends on increasingly irregular rainfalls. Helvetas supports the municipal government in urban development to make the city more climate-resilient, for example by transforming waste dumps into green spaces and by creating a legal basis for community gardens that further people's self-sufficiency. These gardens also loosen the soil and make it more permeable to rain. Urban planning requires data and plans, which are being collected and drawn up by students of Carla Jaliri (right) at the University of San Francisco Xavier in Sucre to help the city administration make the optimal decisions.



# WHAT WE DO

Helvetas implements development and humanitarian aid projects. We ensure basic rights, create new perspectives, and strengthen good governance. We also provide technical advisory services, develop subject-specific expertise, and engage in political dialogue and lobbying.



## Ensuring basic rights

### Water, food and climate

In 2023 **3,352,436** women and men gained sustainable access to water, sanitation, proper hygiene, better nutrition and natural resources, and they have benefited from larger harvests and improved climate resilience. Together with Helvetas, they installed solar-powered wells and latrines, built roads and bridges and learned important hygiene rules and new, climate-adapted cultivation methods.

## Creating new perspectives

### Skills, jobs and income

In 2023 **650,683** young, mostly disadvantaged women and men gained access to education and vocational training, found a job, or started their own business with Helvetas' support. At the same time, **16,654** small and medium-sized enterprises have gained better access to markets, created jobs for disadvantaged people and begun to offer sustainable products and better services.

## Strengthening good governance

### Voice, inclusion and cohesion

In 2023, with Helvetas' support, **109,106** women and men learned to demand their right to basic public services and resolve conflicts. Helvetas also worked with local authorities and partner organizations to help **1,340,363** women and men plan for their safe, responsible and profitable labor migration.

## Alleviating suffering

### Humanitarian response

In 2023, Helvetas supported **384,536** people affected by the war in Ukraine, cyclones in Bangladesh and Myanmar, earthquakes in Syria, Morocco and Nepal, and many people in forgotten crisis areas elsewhere. Helvetas combines short-term humanitarian aid with long-term development cooperation so that people are able to rebuild their daily lives quickly and not remain dependent on aid.



© Simon B. Opladen

Juliana Gonzalez in Guatemala went almost 50 years before she could draw clean water from a tap at home. This is an opportunity for the whole family.

**5,837,124**  
people have been  
given a fair  
opportunity thanks  
to your support

# HEALTHY DIET AND LAND RIGHTS

Billions of people are born in countries without access to clean drinking water, a balanced diet or the ability to protect themselves from the consequences of climate change. Together with partner organizations, Helvetas is working to create new opportunities for millions of people.

## Planning landscapes

Climate change, the loss of biodiversity, water scarcity, deforestation and soil degradation are factors that make it hard for people to escape poverty. In development cooperation, the “landscape approach” offers a potential opportunity: The local population, governmental authorities, private companies and civil society organizations define a common vision for a specific area, a “landscape.” They then jointly develop a plan for the sustainable use of this area. The goal lies in striking a balance between human development and environmental protection. Helvetas has adopted this promising “landscape approach” in a dozen countries.

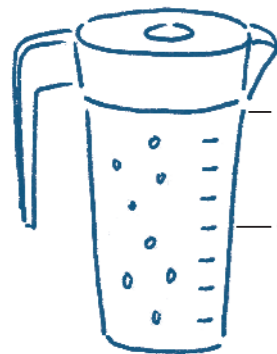


## Reducing our climate footprint

Helvetas measures its own greenhouse gas emissions every year. In 2022, these totaled some 8,000 tonnes, 40% of which came from business travel. For every tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> Helvetas has been paying CHF 10 into its own climate protection fund since 2023; the amount per tonne increases by CHF 2 each year. The fund is used to finance internal decarbonization measures, such as investments in renewable energies, insulation, or adaptations to shading for our offices in hot countries, as well as alternatives to flying for work.

Our target for 2021–24:

**1 million** people will have gained direct access to safe drinking water



2021–23 result: **1,985,839 people**

Goal 2024

Helvetas helps to achieve the following Agenda 2030 goals:

- 1 No poverty
- 2 Zero hunger
- 6 Clean water and sanitation
- 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- 12 Responsible consumption and production
- 13 Climate action
- 17 Partnerships for the goals



**“The price of vanilla is unstable, so we have started to plant corn, ginger and vegetables. This way, we’re no longer dependent on vanilla.”**

Albertine Soamanjara, vanilla farmer, with her husband, Jean Renaud Zafilaza, Madagascar



Madagascar’s unique flora and fauna is becoming endangered as people expand their fields into important, protected forests to feed themselves and earn money. Together with Helvetas and local organizations, farmers are diversifying their crops in their existing fields. This enables them to sell their products and gives them food security, even when the price of vanilla on the world market hits rock bottom.

**CHALLENGE**

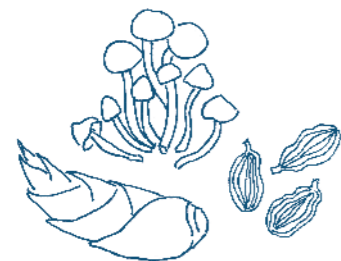
Helvetas' water projects promote access to water, and they help local governments and the private sector to adopt a holistic approach. The authorities responsible for building the water systems enter into contracts with the construction companies in accordance with the applicable laws. While it is possible in Switzerland to demand social criteria such as traineeships and fair pay, infrastructure projects in many countries of the Global South must be awarded to the lowest bidder. Experience shows that the infrastructure's quality and therefore also its sustainability suffer as a result.



**Well-fed mothers, healthy children**

In the Chittagong Hill Tracts in southeastern **Bangladesh**, 40% of children are developmentally impaired due to malnourishment. Poverty plays a major role in this. Pregnant women are also urged to eat less and to consume no proteins so that their baby is not born too big. Helvetas' partner organizations support volunteers in advising pregnant women and young mothers. The focus is on balanced nutrition and the importance of breastfeeding. Women also learn how to cultivate their own gardens to make them more productive. With this training, young women become more self-confident, safer in their pregnancies, and they give birth to healthier babies. A study shows that 340,000 people have been reached and that eating habits have changed considerably.

More about our working area Water, Food and Climate: [helvetas.org/basicrights](https://helvetas.org/basicrights)

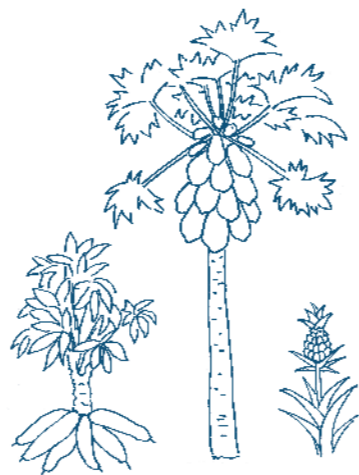


**Profitable forest protection**

In the north of **Laos**, ethnic minorities are showing that deforestation is not the best way to earn a living. In a Helvetas project, villagers have come together as a collective to negotiate better prices and sell their forest products – red mushrooms, galangal root, cardamom, bamboo shoots and broom grass – as a single entity. Buyers pay a premium for this, which is used for infrastructure or small loans. A forest use plan determines what can be grown and harvested where – or if an area must be protected.

**Without subsidies**

A Helvetas project in **Guatemala** is becoming a model for other Latin American countries. The aim is to ensure that the population no longer defecates in the open to reduce the spread of infectious disease and, consequently, diarrheal diseases among young children. The method, which does not include subsidies for communities, convinces them to tackle the problem and to work together to find practical, affordable solutions for all households so that residents can have access to sanitary facilities within six months. Together with Unicef, this method is now being introduced in Nicaragua, Colombia and Peru, and talks are underway with other countries.



**Land rights for women**

A "twin" project in **Tanzania and Madagascar** is strengthening women's land use rights, as well as regenerative agriculture and economic development. Women are planting forest gardens and practicing agroforestry to increase the fertility of their land, which is threatened by climate change, and to strengthen biodiversity. To help them become economically stronger and more financially independent, Helvetas helps them set up micro-enterprises, open up markets and stand up for their political and social concerns. Women lead the project in both countries.



Sayon Samaké, Mali

**605,338**  
people gained direct access to water from a newly built or rehabilitated source.

**312,187**  
in Africa

**210,201**  
in Asia and Eastern Europe

**82,950**  
in Latin America

© Fotomata Diabate

**When water insecurity means anger and shame**

No tool so far measures the emotional toll of water insecurity. Helvetas is closing this gap with the HWISE Scale.

**What exactly does HWISE measure?**

The Household Water Insecurity Experience (HWISE) scale measures people's experiences and feelings in relation to water access: its availability, accessibility in the past four weeks, how reliably it flowed, and how it was used. The scale comprises 12 experiences that go beyond standard drinking water access questions. The goal is to get at the difficulties when there is a lack of water, such as not being able to wash the hands or to prepare food. What is special is that HWISE also asks about feelings and perceptions, such as worry, anger or shame. How often did you worry because there was no water? Or how often did you have to change your plans because

of water problems? How often didn't you have enough water to drink?

**Why are these findings important?**

Progress in access to drinking water is usually measured by provider side indicators like infrastructure or per capita availability. The HWISE findings go beyond this, to provide insights into user experiences. They show how water insecurity affects people's wellbeing – from diseases and mental health to general quality of life. On this basis, political measures can be developed to ensure equitable access to reliably flowing drinking water. HWISE does more than measure the flow of water; it measures how comprehensively the human right to water and sanitation is actually fulfilled. Helvetas will use HWISE as a strategic indicator to monitor the effectiveness of water and sanitation projects.

**Can you give us an example?**

In Nepal, Helvetas implements water connection on premises. HWISE surveys revealed that water insecurity declined from 21.7% to 1.3%. The scale showed the details: 71% of households reported specific worries about water problems. Since they have had their own tap, the figure has dropped to 15% after project intervention. This indicates an increased level of well-being – and that this is directly linked to the availability of water and our interventions.



**Madan Bhatta** is Team Leader of the Integrated Water Resource Management Program with Helvetas Nepal.

# FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND A COURAGEOUS MEDIA

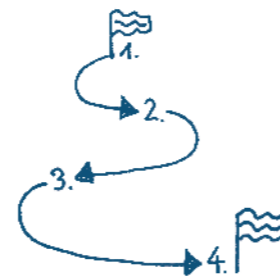
Billions of people are born in countries where basic public services are not accessible to all. Economic circumstances force women and men to migrate to make a living. Millions of people are leaving their homes due to conflict, violence and climate change. With partner organizations, Helvetas helps to ensure that people can make their voices heard and live in safety.

## Conflicts over land rights

More than 60% of all court cases in Mali involve land rights conflicts. Councils of elders make an important contribution to their prevention, but they put women, young people, and those who have migrated at a disadvantage. Financed by the UN Peacebuilding Fund, Helvetas has trained 240 “peace champions” to help resolve conflicts. 2,479 young people, 1,686 of whom are women, have now received written guarantees of land rights. And in 300 communities, those responsible for allocating land have been sensitized on how to avoid conflicts and to involve women.

Our target for 2021–24:

**500,000** people will have been empowered to raise their voice and claim their rights



## Applying lessons learned

Advisory projects on safe migration show that migrant workers often do not take important information to heart. For example, almost half of Bangladeshis know that they should ask for a receipt for money transfers to middlemen. But because this could be interpreted as mistrust, only 1.4% of men and 2.6% of women actually ask for written receipts, which serve as proof in cases of a dispute. Using the Ranas approach, which seeks to initiate changes in behavior (and was developed by spin-off of Eawag, the aquatic research institute of ETH Zurich), Helvetas now encourages people wanting to migrate to draw up a personal plan for their departure. With this level of commitment, they are increasingly able to ask uncomfortable questions.

Helvetas helps to achieve the following Agenda 2030 goals:

- 5** Gender equality
- 10** Reduced inequalities
- 11** Sustainable cities and communities
- 16** Peace, justice and strong institutions

More about our working area Voice, Inclusion and Cohesion: [helvetas.org/governance](https://helvetas.org/governance)

“Mental and physical violence is terrible. I don’t want other women to have to experience what I went through.”

Vongphet Khamvongsa, 62,  
Legal advisor, Laos



Domestic violence is widespread in Laos. Together with a local partner organization, Helvetas has trained 120 local legal advisors, most of whom are women who were affected by violence themselves, and has set up legal clinics staffed by female lawyers and students as volunteers. This gives women a point of contact and enables them to assert their rights. Village mediation committees are also being set up, and law students, the police, investigating magistrates and judges are being educated about women’s rights.

## Extreme weather events force people to move to slums

The consequences of climate change are clearly visible in Bangladesh. With their livelihoods destroyed, many migrate to the nearest city to earn a living. Migration is therefore an adaptation measure to climate change and extreme weather events. In the past mostly men migrated, but recently women have also begun to leave in search of new livelihoods.

### What impact does climate change have on migration?

We distinguish between gradual and sudden climate events. For example, there are slow-onset events such as slowly rising sea levels followed by the salination of groundwater and flooding of fields. In this case, men usually look for income opportunities in a city and return after a few months. We call this seasonal migration. Migration in this context is an adaptation measure to climate change. And then there are sudden extreme events like cyclones that lead to the displacement of thousands of people because their livelihoods have been destroyed. They often do not return home but try to live in the slums of large cities. What we observe is that people undertaking climate-induced migration usually don't cross borders because that requires resources. Those who have nothing or have lost everything stay in the country, but move to cities, usually into the slums.

### Are women and men affected differently?

Women, youth and elderly people are all affected differently. Women staying behind often face hardship, additional burdens and social insecurity. And they bear the health risks of climate change.

For example, often they are the last to drink or they consume salty water. When they migrate, they need to adapt to the new life without family support, sometimes experiencing domestic violence or sexual harassment.

### What is Helvetas doing to support affected women?

Following the principle of "nothing about us, without us," we encourage women to form groups – such as mother's parliaments – to advocate for their rights: clean water, sanitary infrastructure, agricultural services, etc. They are so successful that younger people are now following their example and making their needs known to the relevant authorities. Women also receive training so that they can earn money to build a livelihood. We encourage them to overcome stereotypes and become drivers or motorcycle mechanics. This was frowned upon at first, but it is slowly gaining acceptance. Helvetas is also working with local administrations to improve the situation of the family members who have been left behind.



Tajmary Akter is Program Manager for Gender and Social Equity with Helvetas Bangladesh.



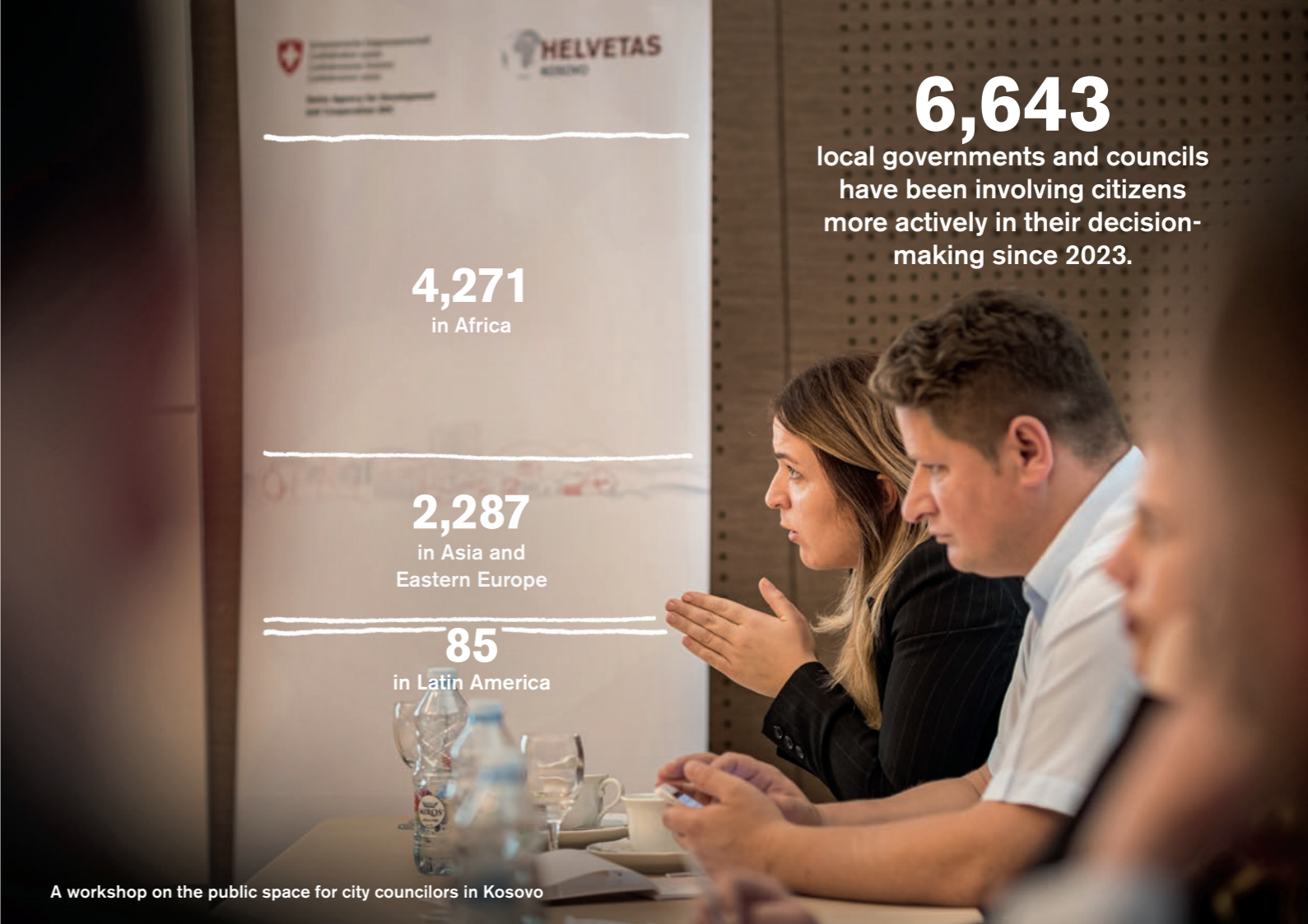
## Inclusive urban development

The government of Tanzania requires municipalities to use 10% of their local revenues and supports them meet the specific concerns of women's and youth groups and people with disabilities. Helvetas supports the city administration of Singida in central Tanzania in meeting with these groups to listen and respond to their concerns. The aim is to ensure that minorities participate in the planning of services. Even in the first few months, it became clear that affected people have a great deal of knowledge and experience. What they lacked until now was a framework and a space within which they could express themselves freely, where their voices could be heard, and where they could collaborate on turning their ideas and plans into reality. This is now changing.

### CHALLENGE

**Helvetas has always worked in fragile contexts where governments and authorities do not have the resources or the will to look after their own populations in the face of conflict and climate crises. And this is where most people live in extreme poverty. They have a right to fair opportunities and secure livelihoods. Thus, Helvetas remains a reliable partner in fragile countries. In order to be "fit for fragility," all project staff worldwide are being trained in conflict sensitivity and security and risk management is being expanded.**

© Simon B. Orjalden



A workshop on the public space for city councilors in Kosovo



## Project with an impact

The dialogue between generations in **Kyrgyzstan** fosters self-confidence in young people and gives older people an understanding of young people's concerns. Helvetas has developed teaching materials for this purpose, including modules for young people's upcoming career choices. The result has been so positive that **Uzbekistan** has adopted the method, and a project team from **Sri Lanka** has visited **Kyrgyzstan** to see what the success of this project is based on.

## Engaged citizens

Youth participation in **Nepal's** political life is minimal. Helvetas and its project partners are therefore bringing together young people through "Youth Panels" in rural municipalities across two provinces. Panel members receive comprehensive education on the political system and opportunities for participation. This gives them the space to actively advocate for, and to contribute to, much-needed reforms, working closely with local government entities. Concurrently, local government representatives learn how to work with the Youth Panels and develop activities that benefit the entire population.



## Media and civil society

As part of **Bhutan's** democratic transition, Helvetas is supporting civil society to become more active and more politically involved. This includes promoting the media and training journalists, as free media constitutes an important pillar of a functioning democracy. Today, media professionals in Bhutan report more often on civil society organizations and their concerns. An article about the difficulties faced by small grassroots organizations was even awarded a media prize in 2023.

# AN APP FOR COCOA AND CAREER COUNSELING

Everyone relies on a solid, basic education to learn a profession and on companies that offer jobs. But many children grow up in countries where the opportunities to attend school and then find work are slim. Together with partner organizations, Helvetas helps ensure that fair opportunities for education and work are not left to chance.

**“The training awoke the champion in me and helped me see clearly what I want to do professionally.”**

Aissa Dabré, food processor

Over the past few years, Helvetas has been able to support 22-year-old Aissa Dabré from Burkina Faso and 2,224 other young people in developing their very own life project. With the support of their families, communities, coaches, local service providers and role models, they created their own vision of their career – and 2,171 of them have successfully implemented it. The project will be expanded next year to help even more young people find a job, start a business and create jobs for others.

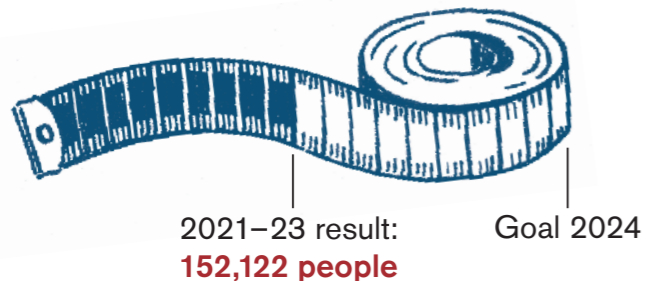


## Pioneering career counseling

Since 2013, Helvetas has been promoting career counseling in Kosovo on behalf of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to make it easier for young people to choose and start a career. Kosovo's career guidance system can now keep pace with international standards. This is possible thanks to many years of commitment, careful confidence-building and cooperation with government agencies, vocational schools and major companies. Over 12,000 vocational school students and over 39,000 ninth graders have since received support at 18 vocational guidance centers and can complete internships or apprenticeships in over 2,200 companies.

Our target for 2021–24:

**320,000**  
women and men will have attended a vocational education and training



Helvetas helps to achieve the following Agenda 2030 goals:

- 2 Zero hunger
- 4 Quality education
- 8 Decent work and economic growth

More about our working area Skills, Jobs and Income: [helvetas.org/newperspectives](https://helvetas.org/newperspectives)

**“As an entrepreneur, I would like to produce solar panels here in my city, in my very own factory!”**

Fabiola Llanquipacha, 29, self-employed solar panel installer, Bolivia



Many young people in Bolivia are drawn to the cities. Young people seeking an education often live in poverty and need money to finance their education and living expenses. Many of them set up their own business, but 95% of these fail. With the support of Helvetas, authorities, universities, industry associations and companies from Sucre are creating better framework conditions, offering coaching and start-up advice to young entrepreneurs like Fabiola Llanquipacha. After each paid order, she installs another solar panel free of charge – where people need it the most.

# 458,548

people benefited in 2023 from the support for sustainable growth of micro and small enterprises across economic sectors.



Anita Chaudary, producer of banana-fiber paper, Nepal

© Simon B. Opladen

## ALLEVIATING SUFFERING

# VALUABLE PARTNERSHIPS AND FORGOTTEN CRISES

Whether due to earthquakes, the war in Ukraine, fragile contexts around the world, droughts, or hurricanes people's plight usually outlasts the attention they receive from the media. Donors and foundations have generously supported people in need in 2023. They helped thousands of people to start anew and rebuild their homes and livelihoods.

### Legal residence status

More than seven million Venezuelans have left their home country in recent years due to the desperate political and economic situation. Peru is their second most chosen destination after Colombia. However, migrants entering the country are denied access to health services and education. Peru lowered the hurdles for residence permits for a short period in 2023. During this period, Helvetas supported single mothers in particular in obtaining legal papers so that they can live without fear and have better prospects of finding fairly paid jobs.



### A forgotten crisis

Long-lasting crises fall out of the spotlight of international attention. Consider, for example, the situation of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, for whom there are still no signs of a solution. The refugees have been dependent on support since 2017, and Helvetas is still active in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar. On March 5, a fire broke out in a camp once again, and 12,000 people lost their few belongings. Volunteers trained by Helvetas were able to save lives and fight the fire. In addition, two destructive cyclones have hit Cox's Bazar in 2023. Here, too, Helvetas provided emergency aid for thousands of people.

### Emergency aid, Year two

The heavy rains and subsequent floods in Pakistan in 2022 destroyed entire stretches of land and livelihoods. Little emergency aid reached the outlying regions due to washed-away roads and bridges. Together with partner organizations, Helvetas provided affected populations across the entire country with essential support such as food supplies, water filtration, blankets and warm clothes for the winter. With the destruction of agricultural land and irrigation systems, they also distributed vegetable and wheat seeds so that affected families could resume farming and reduce dependence on food aid. Since the floods, Helvetas has also commissioned the repair of 40 schools, provided access to clean drinking water for 445,000 people through water filters in community facilities, and delivered water supplies for 90,000 individuals with tanker trucks. Help is still needed even after the floods have receded, because a lack of support means that reconstruction will take years.

Helvetas helps to achieve the following Agenda 2030 goals:

- 1 No poverty
- 2 Zero hunger
- 3 Good health and well-being
- 6 Clean water and sanitation
- 10 Reduced inequalities

More about our Humanitarian Response: [helvetas.org/humanitarianresponse](https://helvetas.org/humanitarianresponse)

### CHALLENGE

Some 281 million migrants, refugees and forcibly displaced people worldwide live in a country other than the one of their birth – including many children and young people. They are poorly protected against exploitation, and they have no access to education. For them to develop their potential and become empowered, they need protection and access to schools and education. However, many countries, especially fragile ones, lack the resources to take care of migrant children and to integrate them into their national education system. This is where organizations such as Helvetas provide important support by working with ministries, local authorities, educational institutions, business associations and private companies to find solutions.



### Cocoa without deforestation

Since June 2023, the EU has required imported forest products, including cocoa, to be deforestation-free. But how can small producers prove this? Helvetas is supporting the development of a digital solution in Peru. In future, everyone involved in the value chain will be able to enter the necessary information using their cell phone; buyers and consumers will be able to trace origins using a QR code. The related app provides producers with information on fair prices and forest-friendly production methods. This helps preserve forests.

### Professional training in a fragile context

Unlike other Asian countries, Myanmar's economy has not recovered after the pandemic, due to the armed conflict and economic crisis resulting from the military seizure of power in 2021. In Rakhine State, home to the Rohingya ethnic minority, the unemployment rate is higher than anywhere else in the country. Helvetas promotes vocational training for the many internally displaced people here, as well as for young people and women. Despite the volatile situation, which is typical of a fragile context, more than 50 small and medium-sized enterprises are participating in the vocational training initiative because they need a skilled and motivated workforce.

## “Education in emergencies is crucial for the future of children”

After the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan, thousands of people, many of them children, fled to Pakistan. Children have a right to education, and even in emergency situations, they must be able to go to school.

**In emergency situations immediate focus is on providing essential humanitarian support such as shelter, food and healthcare. Education seems to be neglected. Why?** Education is considered a secondary concern that requires stability and longer-term planning. There are challenges in providing education to refugees, such as language barriers, a lack of infrastructure and qualified teachers. Armed conflicts and political instability further complicate efforts. As a result, long-term investments in education are often overlooked in favor of immediate relief efforts.

### Why is education in emergencies so important?

Education in emergencies is crucial for the future of refugee and migrant children. It provides stability, protection from risks such as child labor and early marriage, and it allows children to develop skills for their future. Education also contributes to the overall recovery of affected families and communities. By ensuring access to education during emergencies, Helvetas and its partners can safeguard the well-being and development of children and youth.



Asad Salim is National Program Officer for Helvetas Pakistan.

### CHALLENGE

What should we do when humanitarian aid suddenly has to be provided, but Helvetas is not on site? Helvetas was faced with this question on September 8, 2023, when the 6.8-magnitude earthquake in Morocco afflicted thousands of people, causing enormous damage. Over 2,000 people lost their lives and at least as many were injured, some of them seriously. Thanks to the proven cooperation in the Alliance2015, Helvetas was able to provide emergency aid quickly through its French partner Acted.



## Planning ahead

The escalation of conflict in the Middle East is also changing Helvetas’ work in the region. To be prepared, Helvetas has been looking for, and talking with potential partner organizations since autumn, for example in southern Lebanon, so that it can launch humanitarian projects quickly if the conflict spreads. As always, in fragile contexts, it is important to navigate the political situation carefully and to be able to act credibly as an independent humanitarian organization.



## Alleviating the effects of war

With the end of the fighting in Tigray in northern Ethiopia, organizations like Helvetas are finally able to once more provide emergency aid in this war-torn region. The short-term goal is to improve the food and income situation with emergency aid. Agricultural aid includes seeds for vegetables and grains as well as goats and sheep for breeding. Farming families and cooperatives are being strengthened so that they can once again provide for themselves. Support for women’s savings groups also helps to foster social cohesion.

“Ever since the war started, I have not been feeling secure anymore in my home city. I visit the collective heating point to warm up and charge my phone.”

Olesya Semenenko from Kharkiv, Ukraine

ТІЛЬКИ ЗАРЯД ТЕЛЕФО

Thanks to donations from the Swiss population and funds from Swiss Solidarity, Helvetas has created places in Ukraine where people can warm up in winter and charge their electronic devices. Together with partner organizations, Helvetas is also supporting small and medium-sized enterprises to adapt their products and services to the war situation. Craftspeople can borrow tools from repair hubs and a “repair ambulance” is on the road almost daily to deal with emergencies and make initial repairs to newly damaged homes.





# A DEVELOPMENT POLICY BASED ON SOLIDARITY

The war in Ukraine has dominated world events for the last two years. Away from the media spotlight, millions of people are living in great poverty. Helvetas is also active in Switzerland, fighting injustice and working for fair opportunities worldwide.

The Swiss Federal Council wants to contribute CHF 5 billion to the reconstruction of Ukraine over the next twelve years. That is almost CHF 400 million per year: more than the sum of all bilateral SDC programs in sub-Saharan Africa. The result: massive cuts to Switzerland's commitment in many developing countries.

Helvetas is committed to both: strong development cooperation and dedicated support for Ukraine. But reconstruction aid must not come at the expense of poverty reduction; it must be provided in addition to it, because the logic of reconstruction is different from humanitarian aid and long-term development work. While almost all parties supported this position in the summer consultation, Parliament rejected a separate Ukraine fund in the spring of 2024. Helvetas remains committed to strong development cooperation and supports the corresponding Alliance Sud campaign [#MoreSolidarityNow](#).

## Commitments in 2023

Helvetas co-founded the [Swiss Alliance against SLAPP](#) – an association of NGOs and journalistic organizations for the legal and political defense from abusive intimidation lawsuits filed against investigative NGOs and the media.

Together with other Swiss NGOs, Helvetas has lobbied the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the Swiss UN mission



Ambassador Pascale Baeriswyl closes a debate at the UN Security Council.

to use its two-year seat on the [UN Security Council](#) to contribute to a peaceful solution in Myanmar and the improvement of the Rohingya's situation in Bangladesh.

In 2023, Helvetas continued its regular exchange on development policy issues with parliamentarians from the FDP, GLP, Center Party, SP and Greens, who are members of Helvetas' [Advisory Board](#). This includes preparing background information, in-depth discussions on selected topics, and supporting the development of political positions.

Together with numerous organizations and as part of the Climate Alliance, Helvetas has campaigned for the [Swiss Climate Protection Law](#).

Helvetas organized side events with experts from the Global South at the COP28 climate conference in Dubai and was also represented in the official Swiss negotiating delegation.

Helvetas is also committed to the ambitious implementation of the Global Goals of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

Helvetas' development policy commitment in Switzerland is financed exclusively by member contributions.

# INNOVATIONS WITH POTENTIAL

Innovation can be very diverse: a technology, a new type of service or a product, such as a trail bridge. While the latter are now commonplace in Nepal, they are still considered new and innovative in Ethiopia. Helvetas promotes innovation in a targeted manner, on- and offline, with financial resources and know-how.

Experience has shown that innovations come about when people from different walks of life and with diverse experiences and backgrounds can intensively exchange ideas to find solutions to complex problems and challenges. This is the case at Helvetas, which specifically encourages this. Ideas can be submitted by employees, project teams or country teams to the Helvetas "Innovation Challenge." The winner receives financial and technical support to implement the innovation and scale it so that other projects and countries can benefit from it.

One winning idea was [#DevPolHack](#), a platform through which advocacy experts from various countries who work in different teams can find solutions to a real challenge, similar to a hackathon. At the end, the best pitch and the best idea wins. Over the past two years, the organizers have developed a "toolbox" so that experts outside Helvetas can also use the hackathon method for advocacy challenges, on- and offline.

Another winning idea is the [Tuji Chatbot](#), which helps young people in Tanzania choose their career. It helps them to think about their future career options, which reduces their school drop-out rate. They can use the chatbot, which currently runs on WhatsApp and Facebook, to acquire financial knowledge, and it also provides course modules on social skills.



The Tuji Chatbot helps young Tanzanians to choose a career. They can also use it to acquire financial knowledge and strengthen their social skills.

A third example comes from Guatemala, where the Helvetas team is adapting the internationally recognized Ranas method (p. 22) to improve equality for women. The Ranas method encourages changes in behavior. Helvetas Guatemala is adapting it so that men and women share domestic tasks more equally. This will give women more time to participate in society.

Innovations demand time and resources, and Helvetas has set up a fund to help finance their development. Solutions and challenges can be discussed online across the organization within our newly created innovation incubator. The

aim is to actively exchange knowledge and learn together, across all borders.

**Knowledge is what we use in our work. Learning is how we increase or enhance our knowledge. Innovation is how we leverage knowledge and learning to significantly increase impact.**



# WHO IS MAKING HOPE GROW BETWEEN THE BELL PEPPERS?

In Tanzania, 800,000 young people enter the labor market every year. To keep young people out of dangerous, poorly paid odd-jobs, some 3,600 unemployed or disadvantaged young people, including those without a diploma, are currently receiving hands-on vocational training. Available courses range from catering and construction trades to cosmetics and agricultural training. The trainees are supported until they have found a properly paid job or have successfully set up their own small business.

# SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENTS IN HUMANITARIAN AID

Donations and bequests totaling CHF 43.3 million and income from services of CHF 112.8 million have produced revenues of CHF 156.1 million in the 2023 financial statement. Expenses totaled CHF 161.8 million. The lower revenues reflect a decline in the volume of donations, which were exceptionally high in 2022 due to the war in and the solidarity with Ukraine. This ultimately yields a loss of CHF 1.8 million for the year, an improvement of CHF 1.0 million over the 2022 financial result.

## Decrease in revenues and strategic investments

In 2023, Helvetas' finances saw a drop in donation income as well as investments in strategically important areas, such as the continued expansion of humanitarian response and the development of donation markets in Europe and North America. Helvetas closed the year 2023 with a smaller loss than in 2022, which it will impute to the organizational capital.

2023 was also characterized by the debate over the financing of Ukraine's reconstruction at the expense of international development projects, which impairs long-term planning, jeopardizes the reliability of NGOs as partners in development cooperation and threatens the fight against poverty. Helvetas is committed to ensuring that reconstruction in Ukraine is financed separately from development cooperation.

## Financial audit

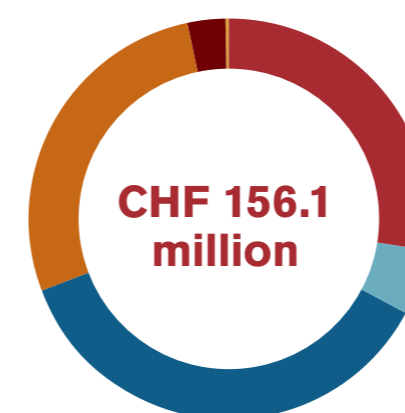
KPMG audited the accounts and financial statements and approved these on May 27 2024. Their audit report and the complete 2023 financial report can be viewed at the offices of Helvetas, Weinbergstrasse 22a, 8001 Zurich and downloaded in German from our website [helvetas.org/finanzbericht](https://helvetas.org/finanzbericht)

The financial statements are presented in CHF thousand (TCHF). Due to the selected number format, there may be rounding differences between individual amounts and totals.

## BALANCE SHEET

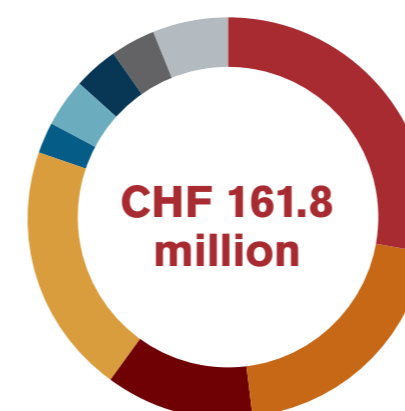
ASSETS	31.12.2023 in TCHF	31.12.2022 in TCHF
Cash and cash equivalents	60,396	52,573
Marketable securities	18,831	18,164
Receivables	5,915	5,948
Net assets in project countries	13,252	13,278
Prepayments and accrued income	15,594	18,096
<b>Current assets</b>	<b>113,987</b>	<b>108,058</b>
Investments in financial assets	36	2,041
Tangible fixed assets	315	462
Intangible assets	1,063	1,357
<b>Fixed assets</b>	<b>1,414</b>	<b>3,860</b>
<b>Assets</b>	<b>115,401</b>	<b>111,918</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Short-term accounts payable	4,834	6,481
Accrued liabilities	70,070	58,787
Short-term provisions	43	1,150
<b>Short-term liabilities</b>	<b>74,946</b>	<b>66,418</b>
Long-term provisions	511	400
<b>Long-term liabilities</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>	<b>75,457</b>	<b>66,818</b>
<b>Restricted fund capital</b>	<b>11,798</b>	<b>15,125</b>
<b>Liabilities incl. fund capital</b>	<b>87,255</b>	<b>81,944</b>
Elaborated unrestricted capital	11,347	12,686
Elaborated restricted capital	16,799	17,289
<b>Organizational capital</b>	<b>28,146</b>	<b>29,975</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>	<b>115,401</b>	<b>111,918</b>

## SOURCE OF FUNDS



- Income from fundraising 27.7%
- Program contribution SDC 5.1%
- Mandates SDC 36.6%
- Project funding from organizations 27.5%
- Income from advisory services 3.0%
- Other operating income 0.1%

## USE OF FUNDS



- Africa 27.9%
- Asia 20.3%
- Latin America and Caribbean 12.0%
- Eastern Europe and Central Asia 20.2%
- Program coordination and support 2.4%
- Expenditure on advisory services 4.0%
- Expenditure on projects Switzerland 3.7%
- Expenditure Head Office 3.6%
- Expenditure Fundraising 5.9%

## STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

INCOME	2023 in TCHF	2022 in TCHF
Membership fees	1,934	2,687
Donation from the public	39,865	40,999
Legacies	1,503	2,993
<b>Income from fundraising</b>	<b>43,302</b>	<b>46,679</b>
Program contribution SDC	8,000	8,000
Mandates SDC	57,052	55,046
Project funding from organizations	42,945	50,736
Income from advisory services	4,588	4,798
Other operating income	186	242
<b>Income from services provided</b>	<b>112,770</b>	<b>118,822</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>156,072</b>	<b>165,501</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Africa	-45,192	-37,579
Asia	-32,905	-38,528
Latin America and Caribbean	-19,352	-24,844
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	-32,704	-27,521
Program coordination and support	-3,804	-2,527
<b>Expenditure on international programs</b>	<b>-133,956</b>	<b>-131,000</b>
<b>Expenditure on advisory services</b>	<b>-6,464</b>	<b>-6,095</b>
<b>Expenditure on projects in Switzerland</b>	<b>-5,939</b>	<b>-5,640</b>
Head Office	-5,824	-5,486
Fundraising	-9,582	-8,822
<b>Head Office and fundraising</b>	<b>-15,406</b>	<b>-14,309</b>
<b>Expenditure from services delivered</b>	<b>-161,764</b>	<b>-157,043</b>
<b>Operating profit/loss</b>	<b>-5,692</b>	<b>8,457</b>
Financial result	479	-2,868
Other result	57	-2,864
<b>Result before change in funds capital</b>	<b>-5,156</b>	<b>2,725</b>
Change in funds capital	3,327	-5,513
<b>Annual result before allocation to organizational capital</b>	<b>-1,829</b>	<b>-2,788</b>
<b>Allocations/utilizations</b>		
Free capital	-1,339	-459
Strategy Acceleration fund	-490	-115
Social fund	0	-2,214

# COMMITTED AND INFLUENTIAL

Helvetas is a politically and denominationally neutral association, supported by 97,000 members, benefactors and donors. Board members work on an unpaid basis and support Helvetas with generous private donations.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Regula Rytz**, President, Bern, historian, former National Councilor, consultant, since 2021

**Peter Niggli**, Vice President, Zurich, journalist, author, expert in international development, since 2015

**Danièle Castle**, Chésere VD, expert for Lifelong Learning EPFL, facilitator Cercle de Legs, founder/owner Genevensis, since December 2023

**Jörg Frieden**, Fribourg, Dr. oec. publ., Development Economist, President of the Board of SIFEM, since 2018

**Angelo Gnädinger**, Geneva, lic. iur., former General Director of the ICRC (2002–2010), since 2019



**Spring Gombe**, Konstanz D, biologist, partner at Market Access Africa, since June 2023

**René Hostenstein**, Schaffhausen, Dr. phil. I, expert in development and former Swiss ambassador, since 2020

**Chinwe Ifejika Speranza**, Zurich, Prof. Dr. for Geography and Sustainable Development, Institute of Geography, University of Bern, since June 2023

**Romaine Jean**, Geneva, consultant, former editor in chief of the society programs of RTS Radio Télévision Suisse, resigned June 2023

**Jean-Philippe Jutzi**, Verbier VS/Lausanne VD, journalist, former dipl. advisor to the FDFA, communications consultant, since 2020



**Erna Karrer-Rüedi**, Zurich, Dr. sc. nat. ETH, environmental scientist, GM/Co-Founder Eos Entrepreneur Foundation, resigned June 2023

**Peter Messerli**, Bern, Director Wyss Academy for Nature, Prof. for Sustainable Development, University of Bern, since 2020

**Dina Pomeranz**, Zurich, Assistant Professor of Applied Economics, University of Zurich, since 2020

**Fenneke Reysoo**, Cully VD, Dr. sc. soc., Prof. Emeritus of Anthropology, former Research Director Gender Centre IHEID, resigned June 2023

**Dominique Schmid**, Worblaufen BE, lic. rer. pol. MBA/EMBA, indep. consultant, Board member and strategic Project Manager at several companies, since 2021



**Hansi Voigt**, Zurich, Partner dasNetz.ch, Management consultant, Founder Watson, Co-Director Wepublish, resigned June 2023

**Ueli Winzenried**, Bern, Betr. oec. HWV, Business consultant Burkhalter Attorneys in Bern/Zurich, since 2019

The **General Assembly**, the organization's highest body, meets once a year. It elects the members of the Board of Directors and approves the guiding principles

The **Board of Directors**, the highest executive body, is responsible for the organization's strategy and for approving the annual budget.

The **Management Board** is responsible for planning, implementing and supervising the projects, programs and actions within Switzerland and abroad.

Potential conflicts of interest of members of the Board of Directors and the Management Board are listed in the financial report.

## MANAGEMENT BOARD



**Melchior Lengsfeld**, Executive Director

**Remo Gesù**, Deputy Director, Director International Programs

**Barbara Dietrich**, Director International Programs, since March 2023

**Esther Haldimann**, Director Advisory Services, since July 2023

**Rupa Mukerji**, Director Advisory Services, until May 2023



**Stefan Stolle**, Director Marketing and Communications

**Thomas Truninger**, Director Finance and Controlling, since July 2023

**Kathrin Indermaur**, Director People and Culture, since July 2023 (in annual rotation with Manuela Häfeli)

Retirement:  
**Annette Kolff** (February 2023)  
**Erich Wigger** (July 2023)

## ADVISORY BOARD



**Sibel Arslan**, Basel, lic. iur., National Councilor

**Marina Carobbio Guscetti**, Lumino TI, Dr. med. FMH, States Councilor, resigned April 2023

**Mario Fehr**, Zurich, lic. iur., Member of the government of the Canton of Zurich

**Roland Fischer**, Horw LU/Triengen LU, Dr. rer. pol., National Councilor, resigned November 2023

**Claudia Friedl**, St. Gallen, Dr. sc. nat. ETH, National Councilor



**Martin Landolt**, Näfels GL, Swiss Business Economist HWV, National Councilor, resigned July 2023

**Lisa Mazzone**, Geneva, lic. ès lettres, States Councilor, resigned November 2023

**Laurent Wehrli**, Glion VD, lic. ès lettres, National Councilor

**Regula Rytz** and **Peter Niggli** represent the Board of Directors in the Advisory Board.

## RELATED PARTIES

All organizations with which Helvetas has signed a framework agreement or on whose boards Helvetas has a seat are listed. Alliance2015, Brussels • Alliance for Water Stewardship, North Berwick, Scotland • Alliance Sud, Bern • CAN Climate Action Network, Bonn • cinfo, Biel • EISF European Interagency Security Forum, London • End Water Poverty, London • Schweizer Forum für Berufsbildung und Internationale Zusammenarbeit FoBBIZ, Renens VD • Knowledge Management for Development KM4DEV, Zurich • KOFF Die Schweizer Plattform für Friedensförderung, Basel • Max Havelaar-Stiftung (Schweiz), Zurich • NGO-Plattform der Schweizer Entwicklungsorganisationen, Bern • Skat Foundation, St. Gallen • Swiss Fair Trade, Basel • Swiss NGO DRR Platform, Wabern BE • Swiss Water Partnership, Zurich • Swiss Water & Sanitation NGO Consortium, Zurich

The subsidiaries HELVETAS Intercooperation gGmbH, Bonn and Helvetas USA Inc., Minneapolis are included in the consolidated financial statements.

# TRUST AND IMPACT

**More and more foundations are deciding to support an entire program instead of funding individual projects. This allows them to promote thematic priorities or development within a specific region. The Linsi Foundation has adopted this approach.**

Since 2021, the Linsi Foundation has focused its international efforts on four countries: India, Madagascar, Mozambique and Uganda. “We have focused our funding strategy and decided to work more systemically,” explains Isabelle Sommer, Head of International Commitment at the Linsi Foundation. This has also meant establishing new forms of cooperation. “I knew Helvetas from my previous foundation work. I approached the organization directly because I had the feeling that the Linsi Foundation and Helvetas were a good fit for each other. Over the past three years, an active, open and transparent dialogue has developed, which I greatly appreciate.” It strengthens mutual trust and also allows difficulties to be addressed.

“Our vision is to cover as many topics as possible within one region to promote holistic development,” explains Isabelle Sommer. There are large thematic overlaps between the work of the Linsi Foundation and Helvetas, including access to water and hygiene, vocational training and value chains. This is why the Linsi Foundation supports the entire Helvetas program in northern Madagascar and Mozambique. Isabelle Sommer appreciates the high-quality work and the employees being close to the projects and the people, thus the communication channels being short and fast.

“Helvetas’ work is very professional, it has a great network, it invests in knowledge transfer, and it promotes South-South exchange,” and this takes time. The emphasis on long-term partnerships is important to the Linsi Foundation, says Isabelle Sommer. “And we can also learn from Helvetas. This is a shared journey, and it has been a great learning experience.”



**Isabelle Sommer**  
Head of International Commitment and Member of the Executive Board of the Linsi Foundation



Julio Antonio, 23, is learning how to make various kinds of construction blocks in a vocational training project in Mozambique supported by the Linsi Foundation.

**THE SDC PROGRAM CONTRIBUTION**  
**As an important partner, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) supports Helvetas’ diverse projects with its program contribution. When 70% or more of a project is covered by donations and contributions from foundations, Helvetas can finance the rest from the program contribution. Thanks to the SDC contribution, CHF 70 of donations basically become CHF 100 for the project. The SDC’s review of these projects also provides additional assurance that donations and contributions are used in the best way possible. Many of the projects mentioned in this annual report were co-financed by the SDC program contribution.**

## WE THANK ALL DONORS, FUNDERS, CLIENTS AND PARTNERS

**SDC, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation**  
Project and program contributions

**Cantons, Cities and Municipalities**

FEDEVACO, Fédération vaudoise de coopération  
FGC, Fédération genevoise de coopération  
Cantons of Aargau, Fribourg, Schaffhausen, Ticino, Valais, Zurich, Republic and Canton of Geneva  
Gemeinsame Entwicklungszusammenarbeit Adliswil (Protestant congregation of Sihltal, Roman Catholic congregation and City of Adliswil), Baar, Geneva, Muri b. Bern, Münsingen, Rapperswil-Jona, Riehen, Vevey, Zollikon, Zurich

**Foundations, associations and other NPOs**

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Fondation Philanthropique Famille Sandoz  
Fondation SMARTPEACE  
Fondazione Vidar Suisse  
FOSIT, Federazione delle ONG della Svizzera italiana  
Foundation for the Third Millennium  
GCERF, Global Community Engagement & Resilience Fund

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LED, Liechtenstein Development Service  
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Cardno Emerging Markets (UK) Ltd  
CESVI – cooperazione e sviluppo  
CIAT, International Center for Tropical Agriculture  
cinfo, Center for Information, Counselling and Training for Professions relating to International Cooperation  
CRS, Catholic Relief Services  
DAI Global UK Ltd  
DANIDA, Danish International Development Agency  
Dar es Salaam University College of Education  
Eawag  
EBP Switzerland Ltd.  
ECHO, EU  
Enabel, Belgian Development Agency  
ETH Zurich  
EuropeAid, EU  
FAO, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations  
Farmahem Doel  
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office – GOV.UK  
German Federal Foreign Office  
GIZ, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH  
Government of Nepal  
Humanity International  
IDB, Inter-American Development Bank  
IFAD, International Fund for Agricultural Development  
IFOAM, Organics International  
ILO, International Labour Organisation  
Institute of Development Studies (IDS)  
INTEGRATION Consulting Group  
International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance  
IOM, International Organization for Migration  
ISW, International Secretariat for Water  
Itad Limited, Great Britain  
KEK-CDC AG  
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LIFT Livelihoods & Food Security Fund UNOPS  
Lindt Cocoa Foundation  
Mercy Corps Europe  
Municipalidades San Pedro

**“Partnering with Helvetas means the certainty of supporting an impactful project, contributing to change and a constant, transparent dialogue with the teams on the ground.”**

Marjorie Beltranda, Philanthropy Manager, L'Occitane Foundation

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WIR TEILEN: Fastenopfer Liechtenstein

Locarnese Ente Acqua  
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PINI Group SA  
Process Point Service AG  
SIGE, Service Intercommunal de Gestion  
Swan Analytische Instrumente AG  
Technische Betriebe Flawil  
VERLINGUE LTD  
Wasserkorporation Abtwil-St. Josefen

**Other Funding Agencies and Clients**

Acted  
ADA, Austrian Development Agency  
AECID, Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo  
Aequilibrium Consulting GmbH  
AFD, Agence française de développement  
AICS, Italian Agency for Development Cooperation  
Ayuda en Acción  
BMZ, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany

## THANK YOU

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
 Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)  
 Norwegian Trust Fund  
 OCHA, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs  
 Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP)  
 PATRIP Foundation  
 People in Need  
 Pestalozzi Children's Foundation  
 Plan Binacional de Desarrollo de la Region Fronteriza Peru – Ecuador  
 Reismühle Nutrex  
 RESET Plus Innovation Fund, Ethiopia  
 SECO, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs  
 SIDA, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency  
 Skat Consulting Ltd.  
 SNV, Netherlands Development Organisation  
 Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa  
 Swiss Solidarity  
 Swiss Water & Sanitation Consortium  
 Swiss Water Partnership  
 Swisscontact  
 TTU, Tanzania Teachers' Union  
 UNCTAD, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development  
 UNDP, UN Development Programme  
 UNICEF  
 United Purpose  
 University of Zurich  
 UNOPS  
 Urbaplan  
 USAID, U.S. Agency for International Development  
 Vaillant GmbH  
 WFP, World Food Programme  
 WHH, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e.V.  
 World Bank  
 WWF

**Partnerships, Alliances and Networks**  
 AFC, Agriculture and Finance Consultants GmbH  
 AGUASAN Community of Practice  
 Alliance for Water Stewardship

Alliance Sud  
 Alliance2015 (Acted, Ayuda en Acción, CESVI, CONCERN worldwide, HELVETAS, HIVOS, People in Need, Welthungerhilfe)  
 Basel Institute of Governance  
 Beam Exchange  
 Better Cotton Initiative  
 Canopy Lab  
 Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University of Bern  
 CGAP, Consultative Group to Support the Poor  
 Civicus  
 CLEAR Centers Anglophone Africa and Francophone Africa  
 Conflict Sensitivity Community Hub  
 DCED, Donor committee on enterprise development

**We value our long-standing, trusted partnership with Helvetas in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly because of their professionalism and focus on systemic change in the area of sustainable food systems.**

Andreas Sicks, CEO, Liechtenstein Development Service (LED)

DDLGN, Democratisation, Decentralisation and Local Governance Network  
 ECEAT, European Centre for Eco Agro Tourism  
 fairjourney  
 Fastenaktion  
 FiBL, Research Institute of Organic Agriculture  
 FoBBIZ, Swiss Forum for Skills Development and International Cooperation  
 FOEN, Federal Office for the Environment  
 Fondation Hironnelle  
 Ford Foundation  
 GCF, Green Climate Fund  
 Gemeinsam für Afrika Netzwerk  
 Gesellschaft Schweiz-UNO  
 GFA Consulting Group  
 GNDR, Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction  
 GWC Global WASH Cluster  
 HAFL, School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences  
 HEKS/EPER, Swiss Church Aid  
 ICON-INSTITUTE Consulting Group

iGravity  
 Institute of Development Studies  
 ISEAL  
 IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature  
 Klimaallianz Schweiz  
 KOFF, The Swiss platform for peacebuilding  
 LOGIN Asia  
 Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Institute of Business and Regional Economics  
 mascontour GmbH  
 Max Havelaar Switzerland  
 Mesopartner  
 Millennium Water Alliance  
 NetHope  
 NGO-Plattform Menschenrechte Schweiz

NIRAS A/S  
 NORRAG, Network for International policies and cooperation in education and training  
 PEDRR, Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction  
 PHZH, Zurich University of Teacher Education  
 Platform Agenda 2030  
 PROVIA, Global Programme of Research on Climate Change Vulnerability, Impacts and Adaptation  
 Public Eye  
 RECI, Swiss Network for Education & International Cooperation  
 RésEAU  
 Robert Bosch Stiftung  
 RRI, Rights and Resources Initiative  
 RWSN, Rural Water Supply Network  
 Save the Children  
 SDC Agriculture and Food Systems Network  
 SDC E+E Education and Economy Network  
 SDC Gender Equality Network

SDC Health Network  
 SDC Network Climate, DRR and Environment  
 SDC Peace Governance Equality Network  
 SEEP Network  
 SEVAL, Swiss Evaluation Society  
 SFIAR, Swiss Forum for International Agricultural Research  
 SFRAS, Swiss Forum for Rural Advisory Services  
 SFUVET, Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training  
 Solidar Suisse  
 SOS Kinderdorf International  
 South Pole  
 SPTF, Social Performance Task Force  
 SSF, Swiss Sustainable Finance  
 Sustainable Rice Platform  
 SVEB Swiss Federation for Adult Learning  
 Swiss Alliance against SLAPP  
 Swiss Coalition for Corporate Justice  
 Swiss Fair Trade  
 Swiss KM Thinktable  
 Swiss National FAO Committee (CNS-FAO)  
 Swiss NGO DRR Platform  
 Swiss NGO Platform  
 Swiss Red Cross  
 SWISSAID  
 Swisspeace  
 Terre des Hommes  
 Textile Exchange  
 UEBT, Union for Ethical Biotrade  
 UNFCCC, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change  
 UNGC, UN Global Compact  
 University of Zurich, Department of Geography  
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**“Since we have been able to draw clean water from the well, I no longer have a stomachache. It’s clear why I used to get sick.”**

Wassila Woroumounou, 22, Benin

**Clean water means a fair chance for a healthy life or an uninterrupted education. Would you also like to contribute to equal opportunities worldwide and make healthy lives reality?**

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 Helvetas is ZEW0 accredited.



In **2023**, Helvetas has received generous donations and bequests adding up to

**43** million Swiss francs and provided services totaling almost **113** million francs.

This allowed **1,484** committed Helvetas staff and about **1,100** partner

organizations worldwide to support **2.8** million women and **3** million men in

**35** countries to forge a life without poverty.

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