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WORKING IN AND ON CONFLICT

Helvetas helps to build cohesive societies where people live together peacefully with dignity. We support people to transform the systems, cultures and relationships that can lead to violence and social exclusion. We work to ensure development and humanitarian activities avoid doing harm, especially in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

ABOUT HELVETAS

For over 65 years, Helvetas has been contributing to efforts to alleviate poverty and working to advance human rights and overcome injustice across the globe. We support development and emergency relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation projects in over 30 countries in Africa, Asia, South America and Eastern Europe.

Founded in 1955 as the first private organization for development cooperation in Switzerland, Helvetas is now a global nonprofit with sister organizations in the U.S. and Germany. We are active in the areas of water, food and climate; skills, jobs, and income, including responsible private sector development; and governance, migration, and conflict transformation. Gender and social equity, alongside advocacy and policy dialogue are priority transversal themes.

ABOUT OUR WORK IN AND ON CONFLICT

Drawing on our long experience of working in contexts affected by high levels of fragility and violence, we work to prevent and reduce conflict escalation, including violence in all its forms. We strengthen societies' capacities to constructively manage differences and address the underlying causes of conflict.

Our Approach

Engaging at the nexus of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work, we take a gender-sensitive and differentiated approach.

- **Conflict sensitivity:** we support conflict analysis and working adaptively to avoid doing harm.
- **Conflict responsiveness:** we promote the integration of conflict prevention and management activities as a contribution to achieving development objectives.
- **Conflict transformation:** we work to transform negative and destructive conflicts into constructive interactions that address underlying conflict causes.

We work at three levels to promote positive change:

- **People:** we strengthen the capacities of individuals to prevent and reduce conflicts in their societies.
- **Partnerships:** we work with civil society and public and private actors engaged in initiatives to prevent or reduce conflict.
- **Frame conditions:** we support initiatives that enhance inclusive policies, spaces and services that prevent or reduce conflicts and contribute to social cohesion.

HOW WE WORK

Our primary role is to be a temporary facilitator. With our support, key system actors from local communities, public institutions, private sector and civil society work together to identify the causes of system failure and to transform those systems to serve people living with inequality.

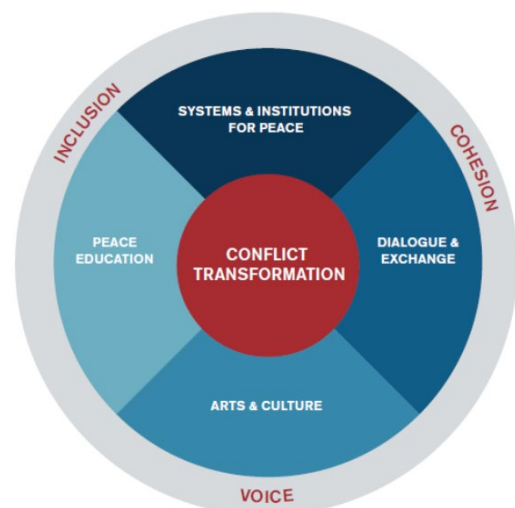
The impact of our work is the product of a three-pronged approach: project work, thematic and methodological advice, and policy dialogue at local, regional and international levels.

We create synergies, and promote learning and innovation through strategic partnerships. Helvetas is a member of 77 professional networks and alliances and works with over 850 local partners to ensure solutions are locally owned.

What we do

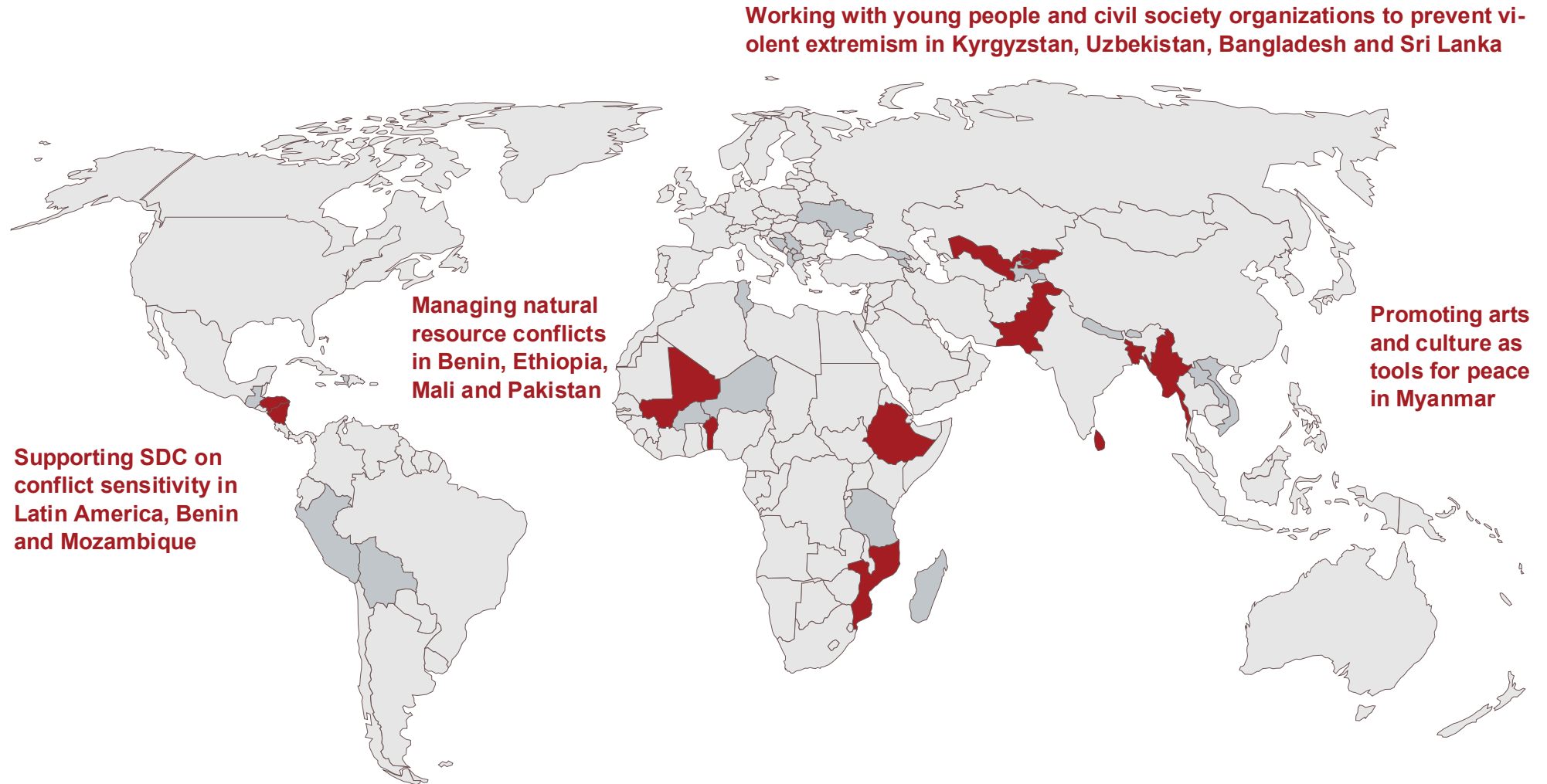
We work to strengthen social cohesion, to promote the peaceful management of natural resources, to prevent violent extremism, and to reinforce communities' capacities to prevent and manage conflict. In doing so, we build on our experience and expertise in the following areas:

- Systems and institutions for peace
- Dialogue and exchange
- Arts, culture and psychosocial support
- Peace education



WHERE WE WORK

- Countries where we executed a project or mandate with a specific conflict focus in the period 2021-2024
- Helvetas partner country



YOU – KYRGYZSTAN

Funding	Helvetas donations, SmartPeace Foundation
Key Partners	Youth of Osh, Progress Aravan
Duration	2017-2026
Volume	1.2 million USD

[Project website link](#)

Bridging the generational gap

The Youth United for the Future project (YOU) helps young people to identify their personal and professional purpose in life and promotes constructive dialogue between young people and adults. By supporting the meaningful participation of young people in family, social and public life, the project contributes to a more cohesive society and reduces the vulnerability of young people to engaging in activities leading to violence.



A personal development training for youth in south Kyrgyzstan

Key Results

- National authorities approved the training curriculum for schools
- 1,450 teachers trained
- 15,772 young people aged 15-29 reached

Key Insights

- Working with the education authorities enabled scale and sustainability.
- Experiential learning changes mindsets.
- Young women particularly benefitted.

GYPI – MALI

Funding	Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI), UN Peacebuilding Fund
Key Partners	Women, farmer and youth associations
Duration	2022-2023
Volume	750,000 USD

Youth, land and peace

Access to land is at the heart of many intergenerational conflicts in Mali. The project "Peacebuilding through access to agricultural land for young women and men in the Sahelian zone of Mali" supported young people to peacefully secure access to land by helping claim their legal rights and strengthen their farming capacity, and by supporting dispute resolution mechanisms.



GYPI project staff with key partners in central Mali

Key Results

- 2,470 young people received land ownership certificates
- 495 land commissions supported
- 44 inter-generational conflicts resolved

Key Insights

- The value of combining a legal approach with conflict resolution mechanisms.
- The project led women and young people to play a key role in resolving tensions.

CULTURE FOR PEACE – MYANMAR

Funding	European Union
Key Partners	Local Resource Centre, Religions for Peace Myanmar
Duration	2020-2023
Volume	2 million USD

[Project website link](#)

For pluralism, inclusion and peace

The project supported civil society organizations (CSO), interfaith groups and artists to play a prominent role in fostering intercultural dialogue, non-discrimination, and respect for diversity. By providing support through 1) capacity development, 2) financial support and coaching, 3) public relations activities and 4) advocacy for a pluralistic society, the project facilitated safe and creative spaces for inclusive exchange and peaceful dialogue among and between different groups.



An artist's performance

Key Results

- A Pluralism Toolbox was developed in multiple languages and used to train 300 CSO staff and 70 “master trainers.”
- 100 grants to CSOs led to 265 safe and inclusive spaces for dialogue.
- 114 artworks showcasing diversity and promote peaceful coexistence created.
- 1.3 million people participated in events or saw the artworks.
- CSOs, interfaith groups, and artists formed strong, continuing networks.

Key Insights

- A flexible, conflict-sensitive approach and effective coordination enabled project success despite the challenges presented by COVID-19 and the military coup.
- Bringing CSOs, interfaith groups and artists together was an innovation.
- Engaging stakeholders early on promoted shared ownership of the project design and ensured ongoing engagement.

LAND & WATER DIPLOMACY– PAKISTAN

Funding	European Union
Key Partners	Foundation for Rural Development
Duration	2020-2023
Volume	600,000 USD

Natural resources and social cohesion

The project contributed to building peace between communities in the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). In an area where natural resources (pastures, forests, water) are generally held in communal ownership, the project supported community mediators to resolve disputes and engaged local authorities and civil society organizations in confidence-building measures and dialogue around land and water management.



Trained mediators holding a Jirga for resolution of a land dispute in Khyber District

Key Results

- A pool of 100 mediators trained
- 591 young women and 432 men trained in leadership skills
- 16 land and water disputes resolved
- 22 inter-community sports, cultural and academic confidence-building events involved 12,907 men and 1,748 women

Key Insights

- Focus on equitable access to, and governance of, resources by promoting optimal and sustainable resource use and supporting marginalized negotiators and mediators to address inequities.
- Training 20 women mediators contributed to women's involvement in the traditionally male-dominated peacemaking process.
- Combining sports, cultural, and social activities with ADR was an innovation embraced by communities and government bodies and which empowered young men and women as mediators and leaders.

CROSSING BOUNDARIES – SRI LANKA

Funding	Donations, SDC programme contribution
Key Partners	Sri Lanka Centre for Development Facilitation, Rajarata Participatory Development Foundation, Kavya Self-Development Women Center, Community Development Center, Trincomalee District Youth Development
Duration	2016-2023
Volume	650,000 USD

[Project website link](#)

Youth activism for reconciliation

The project promoted reconciliation and social cohesion by involving youth in inter-ethnic, inter-religious, inter-generational and inter-cultural development. Young Sri Lankan women and men from different backgrounds received training and were supported to build relationships across ethnic and religious boundaries and to promote positive social change in their communities. Youth-led cooperatives and social enterprises were initiated to build capacities in mitigating the socio-economic drivers of violent extremism.



Youth respecting religious diversity by celebrating 'Vesak'

Key Results

- Vibrant, nationwide network established: Lankan Youth Civic Activism Network
- 13 meeting spaces established for youth expression, intergenerational engagement and civic activism.
- 6 youth-led advocacy initiatives launched.
- 5 youth social enterprises and 5 youth cooperatives established.

Key Insights

- Spaces, networking and resources stimulated youth creativity and energy.
- Youth activists became active partners in humanitarian and advocacy activities.

WÉI – BENIN

Funding	PATRIP Foundation, with support of KfW and SDC
Key Partners	Potal Men, Association des communes (ACAD), ERAD
Duration	2023-2026
Volume	1.7 million USD

Resilience and peace in border areas

The “Wéi” project promotes the stabilization and prevention of violent conflicts in the Atacora region of northern Benin, which is heavily affected by conflicts between farmers and herders, insurgent attacks and tensions around access to natural resources in national parks. It promotes access to and management of green economic and social infrastructure, supports local mechanisms for preventing and resolving conflicts, improves the management of natural resources, and strengthens cross-border cooperation.



Nambouli village assembly to establish infrastructure management committee, October 2023

Results after the first year

- 3 soil conservation and erosion control projects carried out with rice producers.
- 11 infrastructure management and 7 conflict management committees trained and supported, and 2 conflicts resolved.
- 266 producers received business and technical training and partnerships with 6 cooperative unions were established.

Key Insights

- Sustainability can be achieved through combining infrastructure development with mechanisms for management and conflict resolution.
- Market systems development as an important contribution to social cohesion.

CONFLICT SENSITIVITY SUPPORT

Funding	SDC, Helvetas programs
Key Partners	Swisspeace, PGE Consortium
Duration	Ongoing

[Project website link](#)

No harm, more good

Conflict sensitivity is the awareness that our work, presence, and behavior can have unintended consequences. It means taking action to avoid negative effects and reinforce our positive impact. Conflict sensitivity is integrated into all Helvetas' programs, along with the related topics of gender sensitivity and social inclusion, and we support partners and clients to do the same.



Conflict sensitivity workshop in Nampula, Mozambique

Mandates

- Backstopping support to SDC's Peace, Governance and Equality work, including a conflict sensitivity review in Mozambique (2022-2023) and documenting conflict sensitivity and psychosocial approaches in Latin America (2022-2023)
- Support to Haut-commissaire à la sédentarisation des éleveurs, Benin (2024-2025)
- Development of Helvetas' action plan: "Mainstreaming conflict sensitivity to be fit for work in fragile contexts 2023-2026"

Key Insights

- Start with individual behavior change.
- Mainstreaming aims for clear policies, integrated processes and capable people.

VOICES FROM OUR PROJECTS



"I am a different person today. Now I defend myself when I feel unfairly treated."
Bibigul Bolotbek, participant in YOU project, Kyrgyzstan



"We practiced methods of managing or averting conflict more effectively. That helped us a lot, and we want to make that possible for other women, too."
Kejita Balachandran (25), participant in the Crossing Boundaries project, who organized a workshop in her village in Sri Lanka.

MORE INFORMATION

Publications and resources

- [Culture for Peace Pluralism Toolbox](#)
- [Tune In! Youth United for the Future – Trainers' Manual](#)
- [Natural Resources and Conflict Issue Sheet](#)
- [Manual: 3-steps for Working in Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations](#)
- [Doing No Harm & Doing More Good: Stories of Applying Conflict Sensitivity at Helvetas.](#)

Learn more about our work on

- [Conflict transformation and conflict sensitivity](#)
- [Voice, inclusion and cohesion, including governance and civic space and migration.](#)
- [Gender and Social Equity;](#) and [Advocacy and Policy Dialogue](#)

OUR EXPERTS

Our professional, committed and multilingual advisors within our Voice, Inclusion and Cohesion team have extensive experience working to promote conflict sensitivity and transformation in multiple contexts.



Martín del Castillo ([profile](#))
Regional Coordinator, Latin America
martin.delcastillo@helvetas.org



Boubacar Diarra ([profile](#))
Regional Advisor, West Africa
Boubacar.Diarra@helvetas.org



Owen Frazer ([profile](#))
Senior Advisor, Conflict Transformation
owen.frazer@helvetas.org



Regula Gattiker ([profile](#))
Senior Advisor, Conflict Transformation
regula.gattiker@helvetas.org

WHAT WE CAN OFFER

- Support to the design, implementation, adaptation and evaluation of projects.
- Learning and innovation through applied research, documentation of experiences, sourcing of good international practices, and facilitating global exchange of know-how.
- Development and contextualization of methods, tools and approaches.
- Training, coaching and process facilitation.
- Partnerships in consortia, joint bidding and joint project implementation.

PARTNERSHIPS, ALLIANCES AND NETWORKS

