



STRATEGY 2018–2020

EMPOWERING PEOPLE, TRANSFORMING LIVES



HELVETAS
Swiss Intercooperation

Triggering inter-generational change:
Surjaa Rani Chakma in Bangladesh
can now study, because her parents
have worked hard to establish a suc-
cessful nursery.



EMPOWERING PEOPLE, TRANSFORMING LIVES

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INTRODUCTION

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation is a civil society organisation for international development. We base our actions on **human rights** and strive to empower people to transform their own lives. With our partners, we advocate for the rights of poor and disadvantaged women and men. Recognising that the root causes of poverty and inequality are complex and interlinked, we support **social, economic and environmental** development processes. We pursue three overarching goals: **improving the livelihoods** of poor and disadvantaged people, **strengthening local actors** and **contributing to framework conditions** conducive to inclusive and sustainable development.

This strategy, entitled “Empowering People, Transforming Lives”, defines Helvetas’s work for the years 2018–2020.

The strategy is directed towards:

- Our staff members, providing them with guidance for project implementation and conceptual work;
- Our partner organisations in 28 countries, enabling them to both plan and implement programmes;
- Our stakeholders, including public agencies, foundations and donors, showing our positions and our accountability.

Gender and social equity are an integral part of our work. Long-term **strategic partnerships** allow us to strengthen our partner institutions and their capacities. This in turn strengthens our **advocacy work**, which is founded upon deep project experiences and extensive thematic expertise. When a disaster strikes one of our partner countries, we provide **emergency relief** and engage in rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

Education can transform lives:

A technical instructor trains future tailors in Tansarga, Burkina Faso.

Two new accents of our strategy address emerging challenges – **urbanisation** and **improving the future prospects for youth**.



GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Millions of people have significantly improved their lives over the past 25 years. Extreme poverty has been more than halved since 1990. Child mortality has fallen by over 50 per cent, and approximately 90 per cent of all children now have access to primary education. Despite these impressive developments, a great deal remains to be done. Today, about 1.4 billion people still live in poverty, surviving on less than \$2.50 per day. More than 750 million of them are extremely poor, surviving on a daily income of \$1.90 or less. Approximately 660 million people lack access to clean drinking water, and 2.4 billion have no access to adequate basic sanitation. In some countries, the probability of a girl becoming a mother before her 18th birthday is higher than the likelihood of her finishing primary schooling. Across the globe, a large number of people are denied a democratic voice, protection from violence and the freedom to live a dignified life of their own choosing, while climate change and over-exploitation of natural resources make sustainable development increasingly challenging.

The world has become more complex than ever before. Globalisation, technological progress and population dynamics have tilted the balance of power, creating an increasingly multipolar world with ever greater global interdependencies. A number of stress factors are currently bearing down upon this multi-layered global system.

The first major stress factor is **inequality**. Despite global economic growth, income inequalities have deepened between countries and within individual nations. The majority of poor people no longer live in developing countries but are in middle-income countries. Stagnating incomes for many in the OECD countries and the widening gap between social classes are breeding nationalistic sentiments and eroding solidarity.

Fragility and protracted armed conflicts are a second major challenge. Two billion people now live in fragile contexts. The majority of states classified as fragile are also among the least developed. Fragility, which is marked by weak state structures, compromised rule of law, and a lack of democratic participation, hinders inclusive economic development and negatively impacts society and the environment. Violent conflict can set back a country's development by decades.

Displacement and **migration** are direct consequences of inequality and insecurity. Over 65 million people were displaced in 2016, most of them seeking protection and safety within their own country or in a neighbouring state. Migration driven by economic and social inequality also occurs primarily within national and regional boundaries, and yet increased migration flows have become a significant stress factor in politics, especially in OECD countries.

In many developing countries, rural-urban migration and the process of **urbanisation** continue unabated. According to estimates by the United Nations, an additional 2.5 billion people will live in urban areas by 2050. As the **youth** migrate to the cities, the elderly are left to care for large swathes of agricultural lands. Urban areas and their relationships with rural surroundings will thus play a greater role in determining the extent to which future development processes are sustainable and inclusive.

Climate change, degradation of natural resources and disasters have become increasingly significant global stress factors. They often disproportionately affect developing countries and the poor within them. Poor and disadvantaged people have low coping capacities and rarely have the resources to invest in risk reduction



Climate change exacerbates poverty:

During the dry season, women in many developing countries have to walk ever longer distances to fetch water; Wag Hemra, Ethiopia

or mitigation. It is therefore essential that global agreements such as the Sendai Framework and the 2015 Paris Agreement are implemented, swiftly and universally.

Effective, people-centred development cooperation must tackle these and other stress factors at various levels: through concrete projects, by strengthening the actors themselves and by promoting conducive framework conditions. **The UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** defines the international development framework. Its 17 goals cover the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development, and thus set ambitious goals for both industrialized and developing countries. At the same time, political pressure is rising in OECD countries, including in Switzerland, to link development cooperation with domestic concerns such as migration, security and economic interests.

Migration is both an opportunity and a

risk: With hundreds of other young people, Suraj Ghalan is waiting for his papers at the passport office in Kathmandu, Nepal. Timely advice and training can protect him from exploitation.



ABOUT US

Helvetas is a leading Swiss Association for international development, founded in 1955. As a politically and denominationally neutral organisation governed by Swiss law, we work in developing, emerging and transition countries, partnering with poor and disadvantaged people to improve their livelihoods, strengthen local actors and create an institutional framework conducive to sustainable development.

We work with partners to implement concrete, on-the-ground development programmes. We provide technical support and advice to both public authorities and private actors. Together with our partners, we advocate for the interests and causes of the poor and disadvantaged, with decision-makers in our partner countries, in Switzerland and internationally. We provide emergency relief and support rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts when a disaster strikes our partner countries.

Our long experience of working with local partners is complemented by the multi-faceted expertise of our staff in Switzerland and in our partner countries. We collaborate with national and international civil society, state and private sector actors and contribute to several global platforms.

In Switzerland, Helvetas is supported by a broad membership base and an engaged community of donors. Private foundations are our important partners and we implement several mandates from public agencies for specific projects.

Concrete grassroots projects to improve lives: Jeannet Rakotomalala of Helvetas shows Oline Rasoanandrasana how to dry vanilla pods for better quality and prices, in Madagascar.





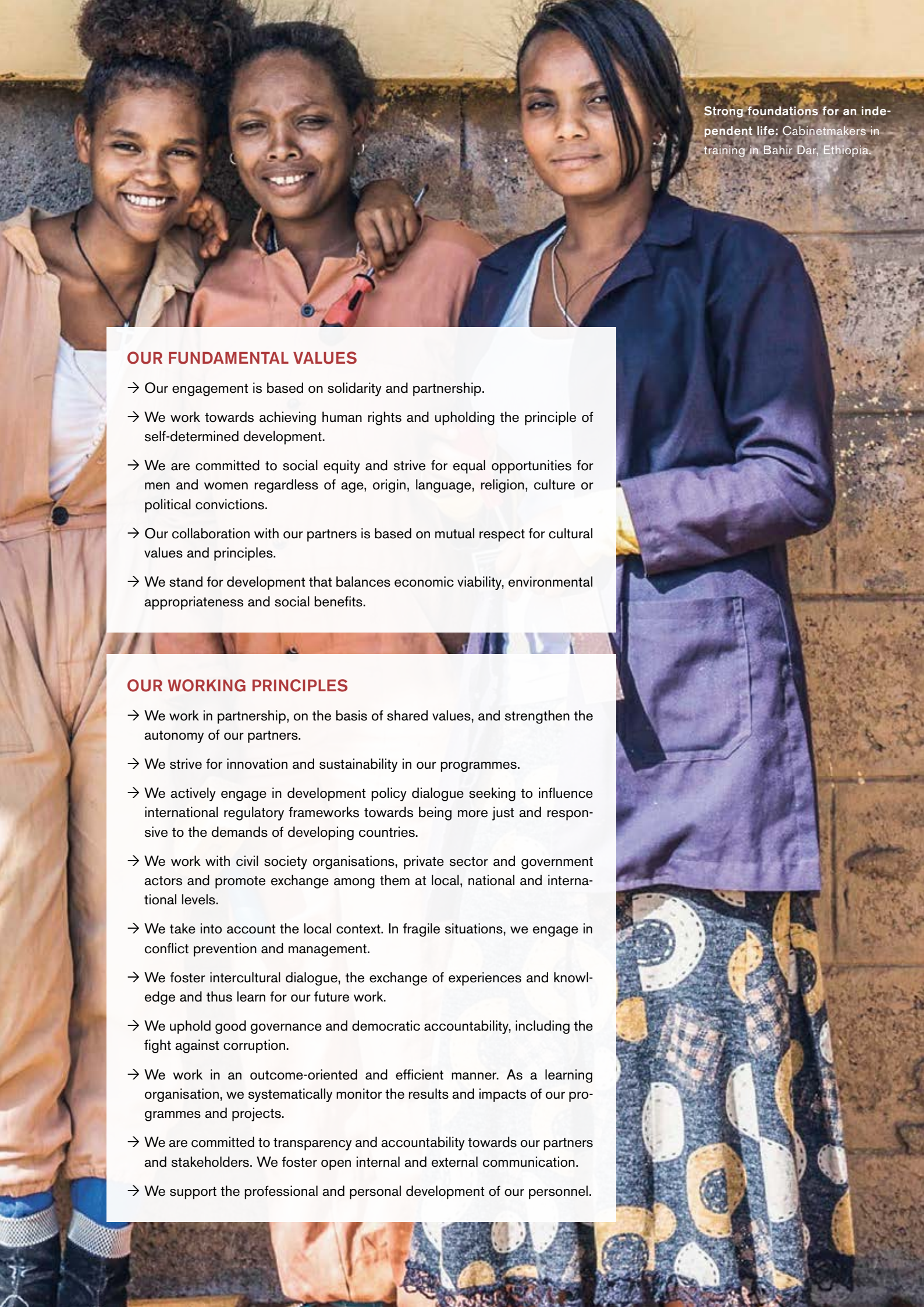
MISSION STATEMENT

OUR VISION

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.

OUR MISSION

- We support poor and disadvantaged women, men and communities in developing and transition countries in their efforts to improve their living conditions.
- Through development cooperation, we support women and men in improving their livelihoods themselves in a sustainable manner.
- We promote equitable access to the resources and services necessary for life and thus contribute to overcoming the root causes of poverty.
- We uphold the protection and promotion of social, economic, political, environmental and cultural rights and responsibilities, and seek to ensure their practical implementation.
- We support our partners in engaging in development policy issues.
- We advocate for a coherent Swiss foreign and economic policy, responsive to the needs of men and women in developing and transition countries.
- We accompany and support our partners on a long-term basis.



Strong foundations for an independent life: Cabinetmakers in training in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia.

OUR FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

- Our engagement is based on solidarity and partnership.
- We work towards achieving human rights and upholding the principle of self-determined development.
- We are committed to social equity and strive for equal opportunities for men and women regardless of age, origin, language, religion, culture or political convictions.
- Our collaboration with our partners is based on mutual respect for cultural values and principles.
- We stand for development that balances economic viability, environmental appropriateness and social benefits.

OUR WORKING PRINCIPLES

- We work in partnership, on the basis of shared values, and strengthen the autonomy of our partners.
- We strive for innovation and sustainability in our programmes.
- We actively engage in development policy dialogue seeking to influence international regulatory frameworks towards being more just and responsive to the demands of developing countries.
- We work with civil society organisations, private sector and government actors and promote exchange among them at local, national and international levels.
- We take into account the local context. In fragile situations, we engage in conflict prevention and management.
- We foster intercultural dialogue, the exchange of experiences and knowledge and thus learn for our future work.
- We uphold good governance and democratic accountability, including the fight against corruption.
- We work in an outcome-oriented and efficient manner. As a learning organisation, we systematically monitor the results and impacts of our programmes and projects.
- We are committed to transparency and accountability towards our partners and stakeholders. We foster open internal and external communication.
- We support the professional and personal development of our personnel.

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Development is a multi-dimensional participatory process that encompasses social, economic, environmental, political and cultural aspects. It relies on individual and collective efforts, but also requires favourable institutional conditions. The most conducive environment for sustainable development is one in which civil society, the state and the private sector engage in constructive and critical dialogue, and cooperate at different levels. We take our lead from the needs and potential of local people, and support their efforts to improve their livelihoods. We help individuals and groups to expand their room for manoeuvre so that they are able to claim their rights and defend their interests. We also assist them in fulfilling their social and political duties, whether as legitimate representatives of civil society, efficient authorities or responsible businesses, particularly those in the local private sector.

WE ARE GUIDED BY THE IMPACT OF OUR WORK

We strive for concrete and demonstrable results. Guided by our partner countries' national development plans, we also incorporate our own thematic accents. Together with our local partners, we define our role in each specific context, and we encourage discussion between relevant actors. We forge synergies between our projects, foster innovation and build the necessary capacities in a targeted manner. We scale proven approaches for greater impact, systematically monitoring processes to react swiftly to both positive and negative developments.

Empowering people: In a peacebuilding project in Sri Lanka, young people learn about conflict management and share their knowledge with their communities.



OUR TRIPLE COMMITMENT

The impact of our work is the product of a combination of concrete development projects, thematic advice and policy dialogue at local, regional and international levels.

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Development projects in our partner countries are the backbone of our work. They focus directly on fighting poverty, and are implemented in close collaboration with local organisations and donors. Local actors have become stronger and more competent in recent years, allowing us to continuously reduce our role in direct project implementation. This enables us to focus on strengthening our thematic and methodological support to our partners and supporting their work on development policy. We also provide humanitarian aid when a disaster strikes our partner countries.

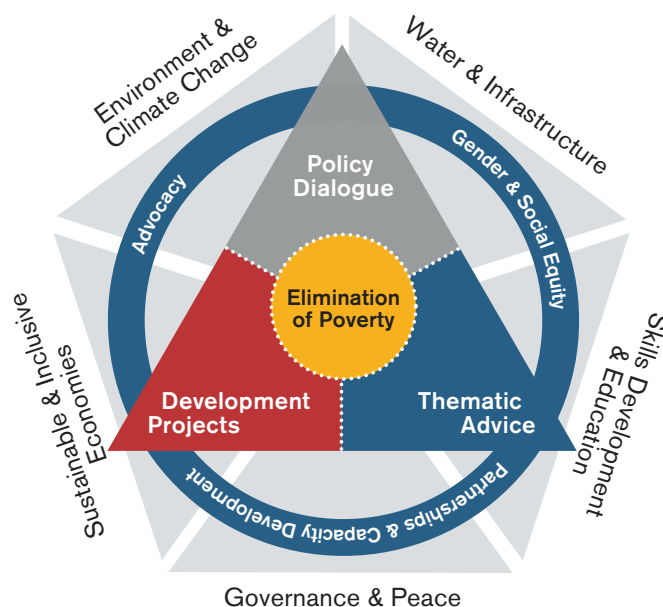
THEMATIC ADVICE

Our multi-disciplinary team of experts advises and assists both our own projects and those of other organisations from thematic and methodological perspectives. We place particular emphasis on developing innovative and context-sensitive approaches. Regional competence centres in partner countries complement our central advisory services, with particular emphasis on South-South cooperation. We organise and chair platforms for exchange on several topics, and play an active role in national and international expert bodies. For this we draw on our long-standing and extensive experience of project implementation, and our excellent understanding of local conditions and of global trends. The experiences and knowledge we gain from our international advisory activities contribute to improving the quality of our own projects.

ADVOCACY ON DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

We foster dialogue on development policy with decision-makers at all levels. We help our partners to make their legitimate claims in the public arena, and to voice the political concerns of disadvantaged communities. A major element in this is promoting the enabling environment for civil society, which is a shrinking space in many of our partner countries. We work through regional and international networks to shape development policy, and promote exchanges between local and global actors.

In Switzerland, we play an active role in Alliance Sud and other coalitions involved in development policy debates. In addition, we are involved in youth education, raising public awareness of development issues and promoting fair trade. At the European level, Helvetas is a member of Alliance2015.



- We contribute to the elimination of poverty through social, ecological and economic measures, basing our work on the foundation of universal Human Rights.
- We are active in five working areas: Water & Infrastructure, Skills Development & Education, Governance & Peace, Sustainable & Inclusive Economies, and Environment & Climate Change.
- Our transversal themes – Gender & Social Equity, Partnership & Capacity Development, and Advocacy are integrated in each project.
- We achieve impact through the combination of development projects, thematic advice and policy dialogue.

WHO WE WORK WITH

POOR AND DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE ARE AT THE HEART OF OUR WORK

At the heart of Helvetas's work are poor people, young adults and groups discriminated against on the basis of their sex, religion, ethnicity, caste or occupation. While we primarily support people in rural areas as they are often left out of development processes, recognising the challenges posed by rapid urbanisation, we are also increasingly active in small and medium-sized towns and catchment areas of larger cities.

WE WORK CLOSELY WITH PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Our partners are non-governmental organisations (NGOs), public institutions and the private sector, mainly local companies. We believe strong partnerships are built not only on the foundation of shared objectives and transparency, but also respect for each other's values and independence. This implies that we are as accountable to our project partners as they are to us.

Our partners set their own development goals for their countries, and we accompany them. We see our role as a temporary actor, fulfilling functions that our partners cannot yet perform, and supporting them to eventually take up these functions. We promote and strengthen our partners' technical, institutional and financial capacities, and support them in their advocacy work. We also expect them to demonstrate their ownership and commitment through active contributions of ideas, time and co-funding. Our partnerships are long-term, complementing the long-term goals of our programmes.

Strong partners as the key to success: An employee of the local production company for rainwater storage tanks in Bangladesh explains how the tanks are cleaned.



We seek close cooperation and constructive dialogue with other international development agencies. Our main public partners are the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). We implement projects, provide technical advice, and are an engaged dialogue partner on development cooperation and policy. We also work with private foundations and companies that support our goals, values and development principles. Collaboration and strategic alliances with non-governmental organisations enable us to enhance the impact of our work in our partner countries.

We participate in relevant development policy networks in our partner countries, in Switzerland and internationally. As a founding member of the development policy network Alliance Sud, and a member of the Swiss NGO Platform, we lead and participate in regular dialogue with other civil society development actors. Together, we coordinate work in our partner countries and campaign

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

Given the diverse interests and power relations, development goals must be continually renegotiated, revised and reaffirmed. Sustainable development requires constant dialogue between all the actors in society. Helvetas adopts a multi-stakeholder approach that includes all actors with an interest in development, from civil society and state authorities to the private sector. Only through constructive dialogue and complementary actions of multiple actors can the ambitious goals of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development be reached.

Civil society organisations allow broad sections of the population to take part in development processes. They help to ensure that development initiatives are guided by the needs and rights of disadvantaged groups. Solidarity with these groups and their proximity to the field realities legitimize civil society organisations' engagement for social change and their demand that governments show accountability to their people. We support our civil society partners' efforts to define these roles effectively, in line with internationally agreed principles for development effectiveness.

State actors have a duty to provide public goods and basic services efficiently, effectively and according to the principles of good governance. They have a duty to set out the guiding principles of socially and environmentally friendly development. Helvetas therefore supports legitimate governments in their efforts to create the frame conditions that enable disadvantaged groups to participate in and benefit from progress.

The **private sector** plays an important role in the development process. It creates jobs and, with them, income opportunities, and fosters vocational skills. Helvetas promotes the development of local entrepreneurs, supports the establishment of value chains, and raises awareness about national and international social and environmental standards. We partner with international companies for specific projects, as long as they comply with the principles of social responsibility and transparency, and seek to promote and engage in fair business relations. When international firms, including Swiss ones, do not adhere to environmental or social standards or infringe upon the rights and interests of people in our programme areas, we encourage dialogue between the stakeholders and strengthen the voice of the marginalised groups.

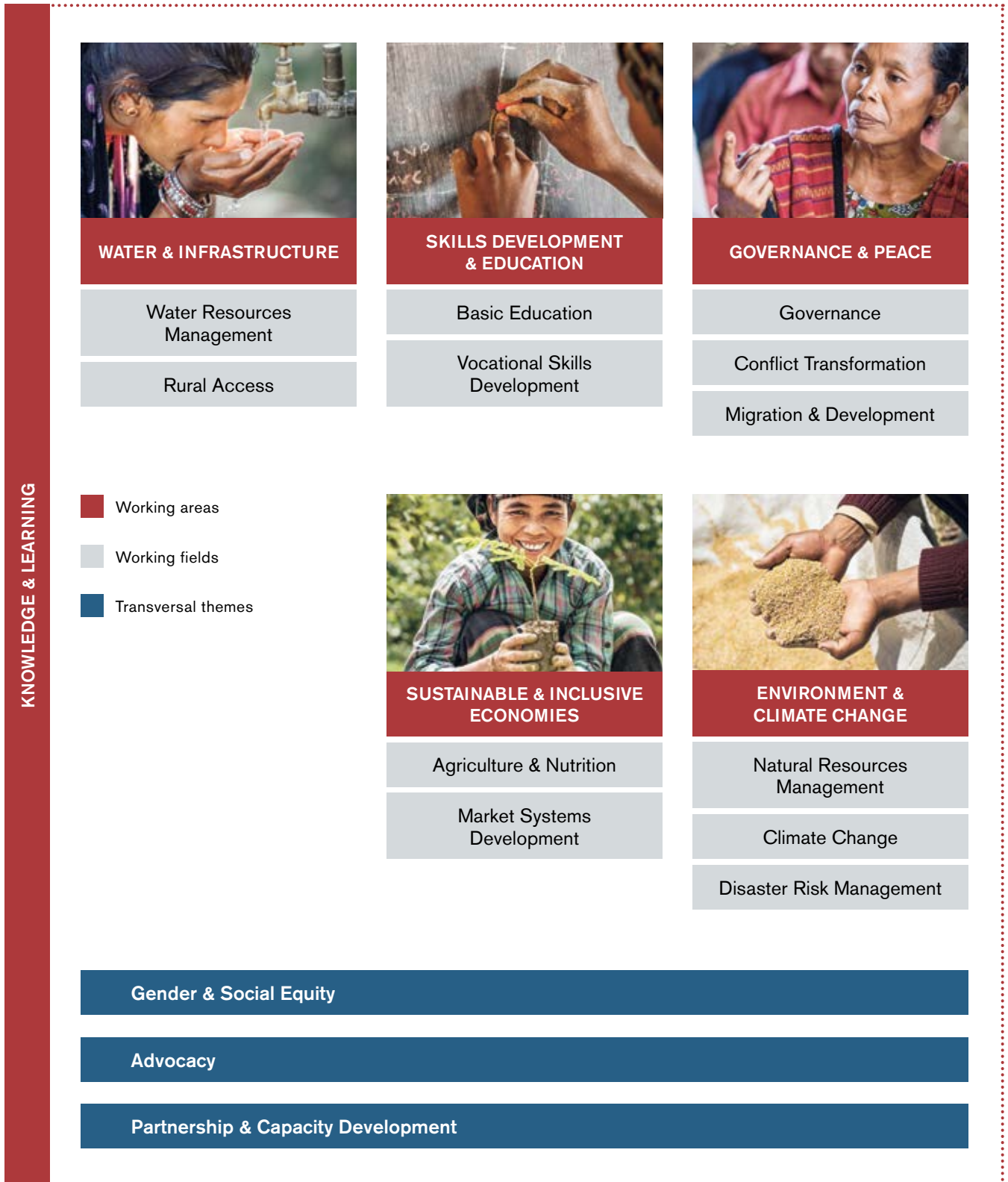


Together for disadvantaged people: In the highlands of Guatemala, Helvetas works closely with communities and public authorities to improve access to drinking water for people like the Verduo family.

on development issues in Switzerland. As a member of Alliance2015 – a strategic network of seven European non-governmental organisations – we enhance the impact of our work in partner countries and our influence on the European Union’s development policy. We also collaborate with academic institutions and centres of excellence to enhance the quality, overall impact and innovation in our work.

OUR WORKING AREAS

Helvetas is active in **five thematic working areas**. In each area, we focus on specific working fields in which we offer an added value from our experience and expertise. We collaborate with competent partners to add value, and take a programmatic approach to create synergies between the working areas. For each working field, we committed ourselves to verifiable objectives that shall be reached by 2020. By doing so, we contribute to the accomplishment of the 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



WATER & INFRASTRUCTURE



Access to clean drinking water is a human right currently denied to approximately 660 million people. Over 2.4 billion people do not have adequate access to basic sanitation. Worldwide, almost 900 children die each day from diseases transmitted by dirty water or inadequate hygiene. Water is a scarce resource, and population growth, consumer behaviour and climate change are only aggravating this situation, leading to conflicts, crop failure and famine.

Access to markets and services is a decisive factor for development, yet many areas in developing countries are poorly connected. This not only hampers access to markets, jobs, schools, healthcare and government agencies but also to new knowledge and networks.

In order to secure people's long-term access to clean drinking water and adequate sanitary facilities, we will focus on individual behaviour, strengthening local institutions and influencing framework conditions. We shall support participation, transparency and accountability in the management of water resources, promote efficient water use in agricultural production, and collaborate with leading research centres to develop new approaches. We will advocate against gender-based discrimination, especially to sanitary facilities in schools and hygiene services.

We shall strengthen local capacity for the planning, building and maintenance of trail bridges, and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences. Our regional trail bridge competence centre in Nepal, and South-South cooperation, will play a major part in this. Alongside infrastructure projects, we will also advise our partners in the development of sustainable transport policies and regional transportation plans.

OUR COMMITMENT: WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

750,000 people will have gained sustainable access to clean drinking water by 2020, and 750,000 will have long-term access to adequate sanitation facilities. We will support 375,000 farmers to increase their productivity and income by means of efficient water use.

OUR COMMITMENT: RURAL ACCESS

3,000,000 people will have access to markets, schools and healthcare centres by 2020 thanks to the construction or rehabilitation of 750 trail bridges and access roads built by local actors with Helvetas support.

← **Building resilience by harvesting water:** A village engineer is building a rainwater tank in the arid Tigray region of Ethiopia.

↓ **Building bridges of knowledge:** Experts from Helvetas Nepal bring their know-how in trail bridge construction to Ethiopia.

↘ **Tapping solar energy for water:** In Mali, solar panels power water pumps.



SKILLS DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION



Education is a basic right and a crucial factor in development. Although many children in developing countries do go to school nowadays, the quality of primary education is often poor. Around the world, 250 million children of school age cannot read, write or count. Approximately 760 million people are illiterate – almost two-thirds of them women. Many young adults are jobless and have no employment prospects. In developing countries, existing vocational training structures are often weak and seldom focus on workplace realities or the expectations of the job market.

Helvetas is committed to enhancing the quality and range of basic education. We support the improvement of non-formal education, which allows out-of-school children or school drop-outs to enter primary education or vocational training. We support local and regional educational authorities in providing further training for teachers. We combine literacy courses for adults with vocational training, for example, by teaching them a trade or a skill.

Our overarching goal in skills development is decent work. We advocate for practice-oriented courses, promote the inclusion of career advice as part of the training, and campaign with local partners for comprehensive reform at the national level. We place particular emphasis on giving disadvantaged youth, particularly girls, access to vocational training. We actively partner with the private sector in our vocational training projects to ensure that they are responsive to market needs.

OUR COMMITMENT:
BASIC EDUCATION

150,000 children will have been supported by Helvetas by 2020 at least in completing their basic education, and 40,000 adults will have successfully completed a literacy course.

OUR COMMITMENT:
VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

45,000 men and women will have successfully completed vocational skills development education or training by 2020.

← **Entry into the world of work:** Training institutes in Nepal receive the full fee only when apprentices, such as aspiring welder Hem Ray Sapkota, have income security.

↓ **Education that adds value:** In Kyrgyzstan, young people from different ethnic groups learn together, as here in a computer course.

↘ **Schools transform lives:** At the primary school in Diaralla, Mali, care is taken to ensure that girls do not drop out of school.



GOVERNANCE & PEACE



At the turn of the millennium, democracy, good governance and the rule of law appeared to be on the rise worldwide, including in developing and transition countries. Since then, however, conflicts, fragility and corruption have increased, and over a quarter of the global population now lives in fragile states. Basic state services, such as protection from violence, are denied to millions of people. Migration is both a challenge and a development opportunity. Roughly three-quarters of migrants move within their own country, and cross-border migration is generally regional. South-South migration makes up the majority of all international migration.

In order to foster and sustain democratic structures, Helvetas supports citizens to claim their rights and fulfil their duties. We also support governments and public authorities so that they can live up to their responsibilities in participatory planning and providing public services. We place particular importance on inclusion, transparency and accountability. We work closely with legitimate civil society actors and support decentralisation processes.

In fragile contexts, we support our partners to use conflict-sensitive programme management approaches. We also address the root causes of conflicts and help to create spaces for peaceful solutions to emerge through dialogue. Promoting human rights, cultural expression and access to justice are important dimensions of our work.

To ensure that migration, especially South-South migration, makes a positive contribution to development, we provide information and training to migrants to prepare them for work in a different culture, and we help them to reintegrate on their return. We support the use of remittances for local development processes and the integration of the needs of immigrants in local development plans.

← **Enhancing women's voices:** In Guatemala, women learn from Olga Cabrera Escalante Sales about politics and how to voice their needs.

↓ **Promoting the rule of law:** In Tajikistan, legal assistants are being trained to help women deal with crisis situations in their lives.

↘ **Women in politics for social change:** In Albania, a network empowers women in local councils and political parties.



OUR COMMITMENT: GOVERNANCE

225 civil society organisations and networks will have been supported by Helvetas by 2020 in their policy dialogue with governments. We will also strengthen the capacity of **2,250** local authorities to plan in a participatory manner, and to deliver services in responsive, accountable and inclusive ways.

OUR COMMITMENT: CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

150 civil society organisations and networks will have been supported by 2020 in conflict sensitivity and conflict transformation.

OUR COMMITMENT: MIGRATION & DEVELOPMENT

75 local authorities and civil society organisations will have improved capacities to integrate migration into their development plans and actions by 2020.

SUSTAINABLE & INCLUSIVE ECONOMIES

Vermarktung bringt Bauernbetriebe und Abnehmer zusammen. In Kirgistan ist eine Konservenfabrik aus der Sowjetzeit wieder in Betrieb genommen worden.



Access to food is a fundamental human right, and yet approximately 790 million people worldwide have too little to eat. Over 150 million children are malnourished with drastic consequences for their development. In many developing countries between 80–85 per cent of poor people live in rural areas, while agriculture is the main source of employment for roughly two-thirds of the population. Smallholder farmers face a daily struggle for access to land and water and are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Globalisation, and resulting food imports, distorts local markets. At the same time, millions of young people are migrating from rural to urban areas, expecting jobs in non-agricultural sectors. These sectors need to grow, to match expectations.

Helvetas promotes smallholder farming, which with low external inputs achieves high productivity and improves food security. The cornerstones of this are maintaining soil fertility, efficient water use, diversified production and adaptation to a changing climate. We collaborate with the local private sector to ensure access to rural and urban markets, and we support farmers to collectively represent their interests. Helvetas supports women and other disadvantaged groups to gain access to land and other means of production. We enhance food security by promoting greater productivity and diversification, improving storage and catalysing local value chains.

Helvetas works closely with strategic partners to ensure that markets function for poor and disadvantaged people, and to achieve sustainable impact. We promote access to rural advisory and financial services. Helvetas plays a facilitative role and does not intervene in markets. Sustainable production and fair trade are important for us. We seek to ensure that economic development is inclusive, particularly for women. A key focus in this strategy period will be to improve employment prospects for young adults, both in agriculture and beyond.

OUR COMMITMENT:
AGRICULTURE & NUTRITION

600,000 women and men will have been supported by Helvetas by 2020 to improve their livelihoods and food security through sustainable agricultural production.

OUR COMMITMENT:
MARKET SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

750'000 people will have increased their income by 2020 thanks to improved services and better market access. 150,000 women and men will have found new or additional jobs.

- ← **Understanding markets for better incomes:** Korotimi San Somo from Mali has learned how to harvest and sell more vegetables from her farm.
- ↓ **Organic and fair cotton:** Kyrgyz cotton farmers benefit from a Fairtrade premium.
- ↘ **Together, we are stronger:** This vegetable farmer group in Laos now knows how the market works.



ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE



Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our times. With a growing population increasingly exposed to hazards, in the past decade alone more than a million people have died as a result of extreme weather conditions, over 95 per cent of them in developing countries. Climate change will continue to exacerbate the number and intensity of floods, droughts and hurricanes. Population growth and rising prosperity on the other hand increase the pressure on natural resources, leading to widespread and illegitimate sale of land and concessions.

Helvetas advocates for the sustainable and communal use of forests, lands and other natural resources. In particular, we promote the multi-functional use of natural landscapes, and foster dialogue among stakeholders. We support disadvantaged people and poor communities to claim their rights and voice their concerns. We develop specific instruments for the prevention and resolution of natural resource-related conflicts. Protecting ecosystems and biodiversity is of particular importance to us.

Both short- and long-term measures for adapting to climate change play a significant role in poverty reduction. We assist local people in planning and implementing such measures, building on local knowledge and our long-standing experience in sustainable natural resource management. We assess on-going projects for their potential impacts on the climate. We advocate for the transparent use of climate finance and systematically bring local voices into global debates.

In regions particularly affected by natural disasters, we mainstream disaster risk management in our programmes. We also implement specific projects to protect people from hazards such as floods, landslides and droughts. We are systematically building the capacities of our teams and partners to deal with the risk of disasters in all our country programmes.

← **Combating climate change:** Farmer Miguel Ortega combines tradition and new knowledge to deal with the increasingly harsh conditions in the Bolivian highlands.

OUR COMMITMENT:
NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

750,000 people will have been supported by Helvetas by 2020 to gain access to natural resources, essential for their livelihoods.

OUR COMMITMENT:
CLIMATE CHANGE

750,000 women and men will have better adapted their livelihoods and production methods to a changing climate by 2020.

OUR COMMITMENT:
DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

375,000 women and men will be less exposed to the risk of disasters by 2020 with active risk management.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Over the years, there has been an increase in the number and scale of disasters across the world, with more people and their assets exposed to hazards. Climate change is exacerbating the situation making droughts, floods and cyclones more frequent and intense.

Recognising the negative impacts of recurrent disasters on development, we are getting prepared to also engage in emergency relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation in the event of a disaster in our partner countries. Our thematic expertise and long-standing local partnerships and networks enable us to respond quickly, with interventions that are relevant and which further the process of long-term development. Over the past five years, we have steadily enhanced our capacity to provide effective humanitarian aid, improved our risk analysis and established an emergency fund, which allows us to respond swiftly. We want to continue these efforts in the coming years, and expand them with the help of partners such as Swiss Solidarity (Glückskette).

NEW ACCENTS

In this strategy period, Helvetas will also focus on two new accents: urbanisation and youth.

URBANISATION

According to the United Nations, over half of humankind already lives in cities, and this is predicted to rise to two-thirds by 2050. Urbanisation is growing rapidly in developing countries. The increasing integration of rural and urban areas through the flows of people, money, goods and services brings with it new opportunities as well as challenges. While the smaller cities, which are growing the fastest, are catalysts for development, they are also challenged to provide adequate infrastructure and services to their growing populations. Our experience of rural infrastructure and governance is highly relevant in these contexts. We shall increasingly engage in small and medium-sized towns and cities to promote rural-urban linkages that are beneficial to inclusive development. By 2020, we will have consolidated lessons from existing projects and tested new approaches, collaborating closely with our partners and institutions engaged in applied research.

YOUTH

Today, over 85 per cent of young people live in developing countries. This can be an engine for growth or a grave challenge if the prospects for the youth for personal development and prosperity are threatened by poverty, conflict, unemployment or exclusion. Helvetas will therefore increasingly focus its work on young women and men. A strong foundation of basic education and vocational training, decent work and a voice in political processes not only fosters economic development but also ensures stability and peace. We will learn from our existing youth projects, test new approaches, collaborate and learn with diverse partners, including specialised applied research institutions.

Creating opportunities for young people:

The training center for vehicle mechanics in Ethiopia accompanies the learners until they find a job or are successfully self-employed.



TRANSVERSAL THEMES

Three themes are especially important to Helvetas for their transformative potential and we integrate these in all our activities and working areas.

GENDER & SOCIAL EQUITY

Development processes can often benefit certain segments of the population, consolidating or even exacerbating existing inequalities. Women and girls are often neglected, but in many places religion, age, occupation or ethnicity also lead to discrimination. Recognising this, we continue to target our activities at disadvantaged social groups, and remain particularly attentive to unequal power relations and gender-based violence.

PARTNERSHIP & CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Strong, self-reliant actors guarantee that development processes are rooted locally and continue to be sustained. Strengthening our partner organisations is therefore integral to all our activities. We invest in long-term strategic partnerships that allow us to collaborate on relevant, long-term processes of change. We engage in regular dialogue with our partners and invest in joint learning processes, respecting and fostering the autonomy of our partner organisations.

ADVOCACY

Systemic change can only come about when critical discussion and open dialogue exist between various social powers and interest groups. We will therefore reinforce our advocacy actions in all working areas in our partner countries, in Switzerland and at the international level. Where necessary and effective, we support and encourage our partners to defend their rights and pursue their legitimate claims.

OUR COMMITMENT: GENDER & SOCIAL EQUITY

By 2020, at least 50 per cent of all people we support will be women and girls. At least one-third of all people we support will belong to disadvantaged social groups.

OUR COMMITMENT: PARTNERSHIP & CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

By 2020, Helvetas will invest in at least one strategic partnership per country programme so that together we can bring about systemic change. We commit to supporting our partners with their core mission and in their organisational development.

OUR COMMITMENT: ADVOCACY

By 2020, Helvetas will expand its advocacy work in its partner countries, in Switzerland and around the world, and will invest accordingly in partnerships, alliances and networks.

OUR PARTNER COUNTRIES



PARTNER COUNTRIES WITH COMPREHENSIVE COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Tanzania

Asia: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Vietnam

Latin America/Caribbean: Bolivia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Peru

PARTNER COUNTRIES WITH INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Niger, Serbia

Helvetas has a long-term institutional partnership with a national organisation in India, without being directly active on the ground.

(As of 2017)



We are active in selected partner countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Our assessment of our impact potential, as a non-governmental organisation, at the local and national levels, determines our involvement in a country. The levels of poverty, education, child mortality, per capita income and social inequality are important criteria when selecting our partner countries.

Our country programmes are designed with a long-term perspective as we believe transformative change requires sustained commitment and engagement. In each partner country we implement a complementary portfolio of projects that enhance each other in both content and impact. We maintain national programme offices to coordinate our larger country programmes. We promote thematic cooperation and learning between country programmes in our core regions.

Most of our partner countries are among the world's least developed, but we also engage in some middle-income countries that have high inequality and a concentration of poverty. In this strategy period, we shall further expand our work in Africa.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND AWARENESS RAISING IN SWITZERLAND

Helvetas has always attached great importance to raising Swiss people's awareness of development policy and their engagement in the processes by which it is determined. Dwindling solidarity, rising scepticism about international development cooperation and a difficult political context render Helvetas's public relations and awareness-raising work especially important. Helvetas enjoys excellent support in Switzerland with its broad membership base and engaged community of donors. Through several years of commitment and experience, we have earned a reputation as a benchmark for competent, credible and denominationally independent development cooperation.

Our public relations work in Switzerland is guided by three strategic objectives:

PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING

Helvetas promotes understanding of the causes and effects of poverty, crises and social injustice. This increases public awareness of development policy, intercultural tolerance and Switzerland's international responsibility.

ENCOURAGING GREATER SOLIDARITY

We strengthen solidarity with developing countries and enable philanthropic commitment from private entities and public institutions. This includes raising awareness about sustainable consumption and living. As a founding member of Max Havelaar Switzerland, and the industry association Swiss Fair Trade, we work closely with our private sector partners to promote fair trade in Switzerland.

INFLUENCING DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Helvetas brings experience and expert knowledge to debates on development policy, participates actively in related decision-making processes and takes part in public campaigns. As a member of Alliance Sud, we advocate for Swiss foreign trade and tax policies that foster development.

Helvetas's **core target groups** are our members, regional groups, volunteers, donors and customers. We engage with an open-minded audience that is sensitive to international politics and development issues. In addition, we target multipliers, including political decision-makers, the media, and specific expert and special interest groups.

Our communications work in Switzerland is divided into three main areas. In our **public relations work**, we rely on both traditional and modern communication technologies, producing our own publications and website as well as using conventional and social media. Our **educational work** is aimed at young adults, largely through engaging travelling exhibitions. Our **political communication** aims to provide guidance for debates about development policy, and to actively shape this.

Sharing knowledge, fostering engage-

ment: In Switzerland, school visits raise awareness of global issues and strengthen solidarity.





OUR STAFF AND HUMAN RESOURCE

MANAGEMENT

Competent and committed staff: Project manager Gabriela Sadud in Bolivia shares her knowledge about cocoa production.

Committed, qualified and highly motivated staff members are the foundation on which the impact of our projects and programmes is built. We therefore offer our staff members in Switzerland and in our partner countries an attractive working environment, and design our staff policy to be socially responsible and family-friendly. Based on our strategic goals, we promote our staff's personal and professional development. We actively support younger members of our staff.

Together with technical and personal qualifications, we also find it important to have a balanced representation of women and men at all levels of management. As a milestone towards this, we strive to achieve a minimum of one-third of women in management. We are also attentive to appropriate representation of and encouragement for minorities and other disadvantaged groups in our country programmes.

As we are increasingly working in fragile environments, we are particularly cognisant of the security of our staff in our partner countries. We build their capacity to analyse and transform conflicts and train our staff in negotiation and mediation. Before and after assignments in especially difficult contexts, we provide tailored support.

In order to continue attracting and retaining competent and reliable staff, we will focus on four key areas in this strategy period: building HR capacities in our partner countries; systematic promotion and further training for staff, especially in our partner countries; supplementing existing forms of training with innovative instruments; and continuing to position Helvetas as an attractive employer in the development community.

OUR FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

We have several sources of funding, and implement both our own projects and mandates from other organisations.

Membership contributions, donations from the Swiss public and contributions by municipalities, cantons and foundations allow us to carry out our own projects, implement long-term programme strategies in our partner countries and test new and innovative approaches. SDC funds Helvetas as part of a multi-year strategic programme agreement, which allows us to amplify the impact of our projects.

We supplement our own project portfolio with projects mandated by other organisations. We attach great importance to our long-standing and effective partnerships with Swiss federal authorities, most notably SDC and SECO, in the form of project and advisory mandates. These mandates enable greater outreach and increase our contribution to poverty reduction in partner countries. Partnerships with international funding agencies and development organisations, especially the European Union, represent another significant part of our engagement. We only take up mandates that match our values and strategic objectives. We plan to further expand the income diversification we have pursued over the last strategic period.

We already practice high-quality, transparent financial management, in compliance with Swiss GAAP FER 21, and proudly carry the ZEWO label. We shall further harmonize and optimize our financial procedures in this strategy period to reach higher financial management standards. We are continuously adapting our financial reporting to reflect the requirements of individual and institutional funders, and going forward, will place greater emphasis on risk management.

Diligent financial management: This applies to Helvetas as an organisation as well as to a water pump manager in Benin.



GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation is an association governed by Swiss law. The General Assembly is the organisation's highest decision-making body. The Board of Directors determines the overall organisational strategy and oversees operational business. An Advisory Board counsels Helvetas on development policy issues. We plan to continue our efforts to include international voices in our governance, in particular by establishing and expanding advisory bodies with national experts in our partner countries.

The Management Board is responsible for implementing the strategy. Helvetas has offices in Zurich and Bern, as well as permanent branches in the French- and Italian-speaking parts of Switzerland. We maintain programme offices with explicit decentralised competence and responsibilities in partner countries where we have long-term country programmes.

We founded our sister organisations, Helvetas Germany and Helvetas USA, in 2013 and 2014 respectively. They are members of the international Helvetas network and share Helvetas's vision, mission, fundamental values and working principles. In 2014, Helvetas joined Alliance2015, a strategic network of seven widely recognised European non-governmental organisations.

We are continually adapting our quality management to meet evolving challenges. Our overarching goals are effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, accountability, critical reflection and learning. To achieve these goals, we are also investing in a secure, homogenous and well-maintained IT system that facilitates discussion between staff and partners separated by continents.

KNOWLEDGE & LEARNING

Continuous learning, knowledge sharing and innovation are essential for sustainable development to take place. That is why we foster working in networks, both within the organisation and outside it. We create spaces for critical discussion and for sharing of ideas. We regularly analyse our projects, evaluate results and measure impact to continuously improve our work. A specialised team in Switzerland as well as staff in our partner countries are responsible for supporting knowledge management, learning and impact assessment. We shall continue this work in the next three years, and supplement it with the help of academic partners and research institutions.

IN CLOSING ...

Transformative change – that makes lasting improvements to the lives of poor and disadvantaged people in developing countries – is possible. Since 1990, 1.9 billion women, men and children have gained access to clean drinking water. Worldwide, 91 per cent of young people can now read and write, up from 83 per cent 25 years ago. Over the same period, maternal mortality has almost halved worldwide, and the average number of women members of parliament has nearly doubled since 1995.

Development cooperation has made a significant contribution to these and several other positive developments and as a civil society organisation, Helvetas has contributed to this process of transformation. During the period 2013–2016, we have made a difference to the lives of between 3.5 to 3.7 million women and men, each year. We have supported over 1.6 million women and men to secure access to and sustainable use of essential natural resources. In collaboration with local partners, we have enabled approximately 120,000 mostly young people to acquire vocational skills. One million women and men obtained access to clean drinking water because of Helvetas' work. With our support, about 820,000 people were able to better adapt to the impacts of climate change and reduce their risks from disasters. From 2013 to 2016, we supported over 150,000 people to claim their rights as citizens and to fulfil their civic duties.

Over the next three years, we will continue working with our partners to empower women and men to improve their lives; strengthen local actors to provide better services and be more accountable; and promote framework conditions that are conducive to sustainable development. Together, these actions are transformative, empowering women, men and youth in their quest for a self-determined life of dignity and security, for all.

Cover: **Three generations, three lives:** in Ethiopia, Kassanesh Kebede fetched water from the pond, her daughter Genet Sintayehu gets it from a well, enabling granddaughter Yemarelem to focus on her schooling.

Back: **Opportunities from rural-urban linkages:** in Benin, Carole Midahuen and Doris Adegnika sell organic vegetables to urban families.

PUBLISHED BY:
HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation
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Adopted by the Board of Directors on 1 December 2017

PHOTO CREDITS:
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The map shown on p. 28/29 does not necessarily represent Helvetas's political views.





Living with dignity and security: Father Leefong Vang and his daughter Bao Kou live in a Laotian village, which now has secure access to water.



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