



CAPABILITY STATEMENT

Empowering people to claim their rights. ©Helvetas/KM Asad

OUR ENGAGEMENT TO STRENGTHEN GOOD GOVERNANCE

Bangladesh with its almost 170 million inhabitants is the eighth most populous country in the world. Since the last two decades the country has experienced a robust economic growth and it is set to graduate from the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) by 2026 and envision to reach high income status by 2041. Despite these remarkable achievements, many challenges persist along the development road. Large parts of the population have not been able to fully benefit from the economic progress and climate change is posed to exacerbate such inequalities.

Civil society's active involvement, especially at local level through political participation, is crucial to foster a conducive environment for national development and well-being. However, the decentralization process is losing momentum, and this contributes to an increased sense of distance and lack

of trust towards institutions. Moreover, a set of norms intended to curb hate speech is hampering the ability of media to report on different voices and limiting the capacity of citizens to express their opinions.

Young people, a third of Bangladeshi population, are demanding a greater role in shaping the future of the country, stronger democratic participation and social justice.

Since 2000, Helvetas Bangladesh has been promoting **good governance** and **social accountability**, empowering communities and bolstering civic spaces. Helvetas efforts include **strengthening civil society organizations**, promoting civic engagement, and advocating for the rights of women, youth, and left behind groups. In addition, we support local governments to deliver inclusive and gender-responsive service, also through public-private partnerships.

OUR APPROACHES

Fostering good governance through Human Rights Based Approach (HBRA)



Helvetas idea of good governance is anchored on the **Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA)**: we believe that all individuals are entitled to the same rights and should be able to participate in the political and economic decision making to actively claim those rights. Therefore, we work with civil society and community-based organizations (CSO, CBO), left-behind women and young people to strengthen their capacities on how to advocate for more inclusive policies, es-

pecially on WASH, climate change, women and youth centric economic opportunities; and how to demand better transparency and accountability through budget monitoring and activation of dedicated civic spaces for citizens centred local governments (i.e. Ward Shava, Standing Committee, Union Development Coordination Committee, etc.)

We also support local authorities to enhance their ability to deliver efficient, participatory and inclusive services.



Understanding the context to enhance social cohesion

Conflict Sensitive Programme Management

Conflict sensitive programme management (CSPM) is a Helvetas' institutional approach that is systematically applied throughout all projects. Every development intervention is happening in communities where overt or latent conflicts might occur. Projects have the potential to mitigate such conflicts, thus strengthening social cohesion, but also to exacerbate them, if the context is not well understood. Therefore, our activities are based on a sound analysis of the situation through consolidated methods and tools that allow us to constantly adapt interventions. Helvetas follow a 3-step approach to CSPM :1) analysing the context, 2) understanding the interaction between organization and the context, and 3) taking strategic decisions based on evidence.

We also share our knowledge and capacities with local partners and community organisations to ensure long term positive impacts.

Political Economic and Power Analysis

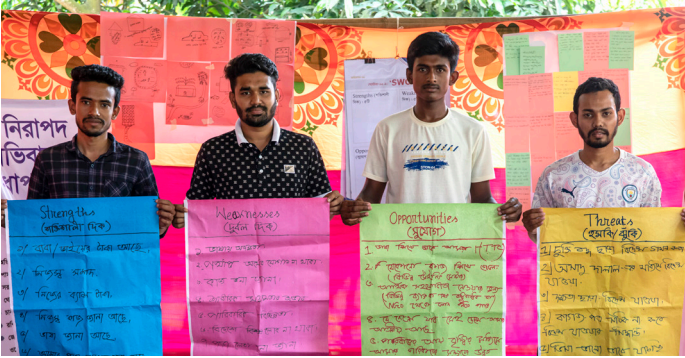
Without having a thorough understanding of the context where development interventions take place, it's possible

to stumble upon resistance and barriers to transformative change. For this, Helvetas has developed its Political Economy and Power Analysis (PEPA), using **six different lenses** to assess power dynamics, resource distribution, vested economic and political interests and social interactions that lie below formal governance structures. We look into:

1. **Actors/Agents**: individual: individuals, organisations, networks or movements;
2. **Institutions**: formal and informal rules of the game;
3. **Resource flows**: capital, information/data monopoly over natural resources, commodities, market niches;
4. **Spaces**: existing and potential arena for participation through which power can be exercised;
5. **Exogenous factors**: external factors that can be game-changing events;
6. **Structural factors**: long lasting or deep-seated features of the region, state or society shaping the context.

PEPA fosters the trust of local communities to find workable solutions to issues by having a deeper understanding of the context and identifying actors as collaborators or opposers.

OUR FOCUS AREAS



Aspirant migrants at a pre-decision orientation. ©Helvetas/K.M.Asad

Governance and Civic Space

We empower women and communities to advocate for inclusive policies and budget allocations in urban and local governance. Fostering citizens' ability to speak up for their rights contribute to increase the **accountability** of local authorities. Simultaneously, Helvetas works with government institutions at all levels to reinforce their capacities for a more **inclusive and responsive service delivery**. This contributes to achieving key indicators within the Smart Bangladesh ecosystems (such as "Smart Citizen," "Smart Society," "Smart Economy," and "Smart Government"). Our aim is to enable frameworks for rights & accountability, equitable access to services and benefits, evidence & dialogue for policy change and people-centric local governance.

Our projects focus on promoting empowerment and meaningful involvement of local people in social, economic, and political activities to strengthen their ownership, reinforce the exercise of their **civic duties**, and **rights claiming**. We use activities such as peer-led community voluntarism, empowering community-based organizations, multi-stakeholder engagement, capacity building of CSOs and strengthening horizontal and vertical networking of CSOs and CBOs.

Migration

We maximize the development benefits of migration and **protect the rights of migrant workers and their families** by strengthening institutions that work at the interface between government, people on the move and migrant organizations in the places of origin and destination.

We aim to improve the well-being of migrants through **safer migration practices** and strengthened service delivery at the different stages of pre-departure, during migration to countries of destination and upon return and re-integration to Bangladesh.

Aspirant migrants have easier access to the necessary information through improved coordination among multiple actors. Risks connected to migration are reduced by raising awareness of the benefits and pitfalls of migration, skill development and financial literacy training. Moreover we enhance safeguarding of the rights and well-being of people on the move and their families by ensuring a better **access to justice**.

Youth Empowerment

Young people can be agents of positive change in their soci-

eties, if they live in an environment that values them, provides them safe spaces to express themselves and actively seize social, economic and political opportunities.

Helvetas has developed a set of approaches to work intergenerationally, cross-culturally and across faiths with young people to address the root causes that prevents them to thrive. We acknowledge that "youth" is not a homogeneous group, and that their lived experiences differ, based on gender, cultural background, ethnicity, education, employment status, rural or urban context, etc. Our Youth Taskforce supports young people in becoming positive change agents through innovation and networking.



Sharing knowledge on social media. ©Helvetas / Al Mufti Sohan

Women Empowerment

Our approach to women empowerment is grounded in principles of fairness, responsibility, and justice. We strive to provide women with the resources, opportunities, and agency necessary to participate actively in decision-making processes and access politics and social services on par with men. We aim to enhance **women's participation and representation** in political processes and political decision-making, challenging harmful social norms and stereotypes that uphold gender inequality and discrimination against women. We also work with men, community leaders, and elected male politicians to **raise awareness of gender-related issues**, and the need to increase women's political participation.

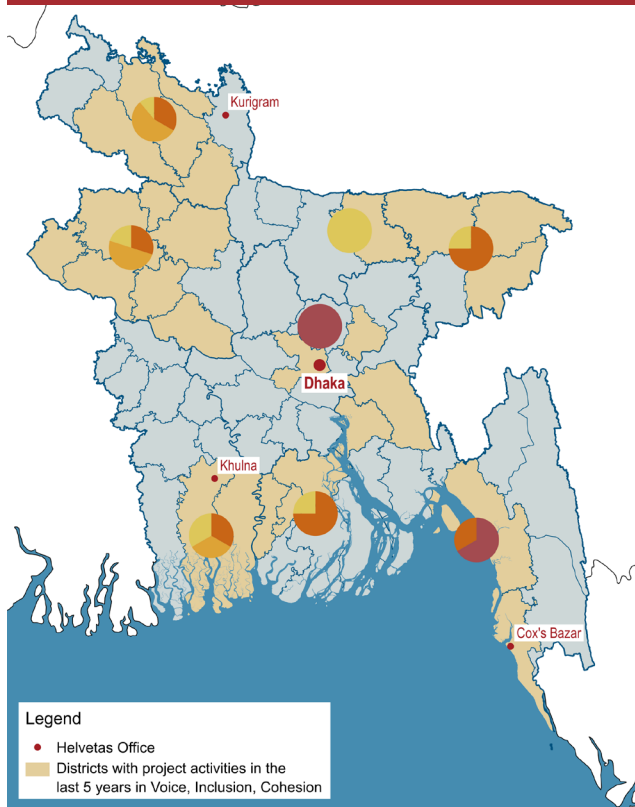
Our interventions support women to contribute more effectively to economic growth, gender-responsive planning & budgeting at local level, social cohesion, and democratic governance, for their own benefit, that of their families, and communities.

Prevention of Violent Extremism

The causes of radicalization and violent extremism are complex and manifold: ranging from underemployment to lack of representation and participation in decision-making processes. Preventing violent extremism is not merely a matter of laws and security measures, but it relies on the power of empathy, and the ability to establish meaningful connections.

Helvetas developed a set of tools to strengthen social cohesion and inclusion of left-behind youth. Through a multi-stakeholder engagement we promote intercultural dialogues, sensitization on the use of social media, and the use of arts and culture to foster peace.

OUR EXPERIENCE



Youth Empowerment

Key Results

- **76,074 youth (38% female)** reached through different interventions at the community level and in **36** education institutes in **10** locations
- **10** local **CSOs** formed 10 district-based multi-stakeholder platforms, and empowered **1340 young people** as agents of change

Key Insights

- Interventions must be centred on young people's needs, interests and dynamics, exploring new formats (e.g., virtual platforms), tailoring context-specific messages, and embracing flexible planning.
- Engaging multiple stakeholders is crucial to gain acceptance of activities aimed at fostering social cohesion and preventing violent extremism.

Women Empowerment

Key Results

- Nearly **9,000** grassroots women leaders supported in **540** Union Parishad across 16 districts. More than **1,000** have been trained to join women political networks at local level.
- Over **600,000** people (family members, community leaders, youth) sensitized on women political empowerment and gender issues.
- Overall contesting for reserved seat increased by **21%**.

Key Insights

- To achieve lasting women's political empowerment, it is key to engage for better enforcement of existing favourable policy and laws.

Migration

Key Results

- More than **83,200** people have participated in pre-decision-making orientation (PDMO) sessions. This initiative led to a 39% increase in safe migration.
- **1,353** aggrieved Migrant Workers and/or Left Behind Family Members (LBFM) accessed formal and non-formal justice systems to address their grievances.
- Successfully piloted **decentralization of migration arbitration systems** by BMET (Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training).

Key Insights

- Cost-benefit analysis and first-hand experience sharing by returned migrants increases the positive impact of pre-decision-making orientation meetings.



Open budget meeting. ©Helvetas/Jens Engeli

Governance and civic space

Key Results

- **5,600 Union Parishad (UP) Chairman**, members and UP secretaries of **400 UPs** trained on tax assessment, tax collection, open budget meetings and information disclosure.
- **9,000 CSO members** were trained in tax assessment, tax payment, budget literacy, and ward fairs and **6,123 CSO members** were trained on democratic leadership and related laws to advocate at local level decision-making processes.
- UP tax revenue collection increased by about **6 times** within three years thanks to budget transparency.

Key Insights

- Fostering participation of communities in political decision-making proves to be instrumental for local government institutions to achieving their development goals.
- Developing evidence-based advocacy plans allows CSOs to escalate local issues to national level and maximize their impact.