



**HELVETAS**  
NEPAL

"Resilient Communities. Inclusive Growth. Accountable Systems."

# Country Strategy 2025-2028



## WHO WE ARE

Helvetas is an independent Swiss development organisation committed to fostering meaningful change across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. Each year, our programmes positively impact over three million marginalised individuals.

Our work spans critical areas such as water, food, climate, skills development, jobs and enterprises, governance, youth engagement, migration governance, urban resilience, and gender and social equity. In times of crisis, we also provide humanitarian aid and emergency response. Guided by solidarity and political neutrality, we actively participate in development policy dialogues. As a member of Alliance2015, a network of seven European Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), we collaborate to amplify our global impact.

Since 1956, Helvetas has been a trusted development partner in Nepal. A key achievement is the construction of over 10,000 trail bridges by November 2024, revolutionizing connectivity in remote areas. These bridges have improved mobility and helped strengthen local government systems to sustain and manage infrastructure independently.

We work closely with Nepal's federal governance structure to ensure it serves all citizens, especially the disadvantaged and marginalised. Our focus on state-building, system strengthening, and driving systemic change enables more inclusive, accountable, and responsive government institutions, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and private sector partners. Through these efforts, we contribute to improving policies and their implementation, advancing a more equitable and resilient governance system in Nepal's evolving federal landscape.

Helvetas remains aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the priorities of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). We continue to address pressing challenges such as climate change, strengthening federal governance, and sustainable urban development, ensuring our work meets Nepal's evolving needs.

# NEPAL'S EVOLVING CONTEXT

Nepal is at a pivotal stage in its development, navigating the complexities of federal transition – unclear laws, capacity gaps, political instability, corruption, and slow economic growth. These challenges weaken public trust and constrain service delivery. These are further compounded by fragile geology, increasing climate risks and structural socio-economic marginalization. Yet steady social progress and the country's expected graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status by 2026 signal rising aspirations, even as deeper economic transformation remains incomplete.

Remittance remains a stabilizing force but also a structural constraint, sustaining households yet seldom generating productive investment due to weak markets, limited financial literacy, and inadequate skills. Youth out-migration has reshaped rural economies and contributed to the feminization of agriculture. At the same time, Nepal's young, digitally connected, and vocal population offers significant potential. Harnessing this youth dividend is key to driving innovation, entrepreneurship, and inclusive governance.

A mountainous country warming faster than the global average: Nepal is vulnerable to escalating climate risks such as floods, glacial lake outburst floods, landslides, water stress, and ecosystem and biodiversity loss. Climate vulnerability is intensifying development pressures, with climate-induced disasters impacting the lives and livelihoods of marginalised communities. Yet, this context also opens opportunities – from climate resilient agriculture and regenerative practices to green jobs and local resilience initiatives that harness youth ingenuity and community knowledge.





Nepal's 753 municipalities are driving rapid urbanisation but facing unplanned growth, weak infrastructure, and environmental pressures. Yet urban areas also offer strong potential for youth-led innovation, better planning, and climate responsive development. With stronger governance, they could become engines of economic and social transformation.

Persistent gender and social inclusion barriers continue to limit progress, with women, Dalits, indigenous groups, people with disabilities, and remote communities facing structural discrimination and restricted opportunities. Addressing these inequities is vital for social cohesion and sustainable development.

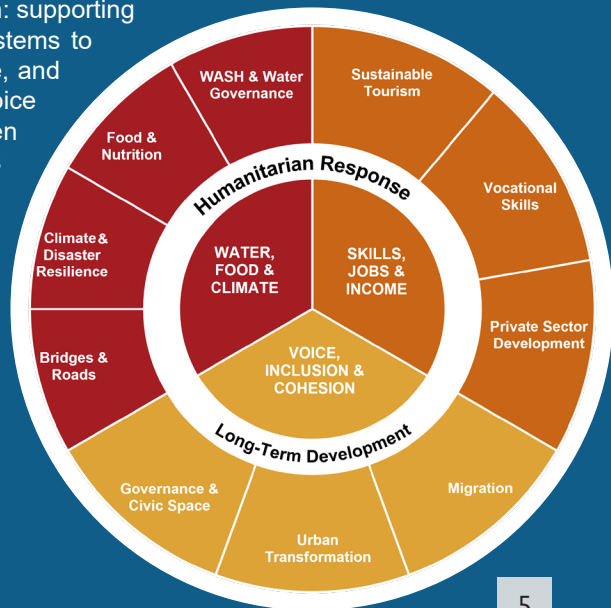
Nepal stands at a moment of possibility. A youthful population, a maturing federal system, and growing global momentum for green and resilient development are opening real pathways for transformation. By investing in youth, strengthening governance, advancing climate resilience, and supporting sustainable rural and urban development, Nepal can turn today's challenges into opportunities and build a more equitable and resilient future.

# OUR WORKING AREAS

In line with our global strategy, Helvetas Nepal will focus on three interlinked Working Areas and ten subordinate Working Fields during this strategic period. This approach allows us to tackle the multiple dimensions of poverty and inequality with cross-sectoral solutions, contributing to the Agenda 2030 and other international frameworks, such as the Paris Agreement.

Helvetas Nepal, together with its partners, works with underserved women, men, and people from marginalised groups to improve their living conditions in a sustainable manner. The organisation promotes equitable inclusion, ensuring representation in decision-making processes and improving access to resources, services, and income. This approach directly addresses the root causes of poverty and inequality. Helvetas Nepal also advocates for human rights, access to justice, and engages in systemic change and development policy discussions.

Beyond defining what we do, the strategy sharpens how and why Helvetas Nepal engages in addressing poverty and inequality in a rapidly changing national context. While maintaining a broad portfolio across ten Working Fields, the strategy deliberately deepens our engagement in two interlinked priorities that are most critical for Nepal's future: climate and disaster resilience, and jobs, income, and economic inclusion. These are not treated as standalone sectors, but as systemic challenges that shape vulnerability, opportunity, and social cohesion across rural, urban, and migratory contexts. The strategy reflects a political shift from addressing poverty primarily as a lack of services or assets toward confronting inequality as a structural issue—rooted in power relations, exclusion from decision-making, unequal access to markets and resources, and differentiated exposure to climate and economic shocks. Across all Working Areas, governance and systems strengthening underpin our approach: supporting institutions, policies, and market systems to become more inclusive, accountable, and responsive, while amplifying the voice and agency of those who are most often left behind. Through this, Helvetas Nepal positions itself as a catalyst for long-term, transformative change that enables people to build resilient livelihoods and participate meaningfully in shaping their own development pathways.



# WATER, FOOD AND CLIMATE

Helvetas Nepal has a long history of addressing water and food security, from community water supply projects to the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) approach. Our focus is on ensuring sustainable access to resources, safe water, sanitation, nutritious food, and climate-resilient living for both rural and urban communities.

**Outcome:** People, including those left behind, are more food and water secure, with a pathway to climate resilience and sustainably managed natural resources.



## WASH and Water Governance

Despite progress in water coverage, Nepal faces challenges in ensuring the quality, reliability, and sustainability of water systems. Helvetas Nepal, through IWRM, advocates for improved water governance, aiming for last-mile delivery through local governments.

## Food and Nutrition

Given Nepal's vulnerability to climate risks, promoting climate-resilient agricultural practices is key. Helvetas Nepal will support crop diversification, drought-resistant and nutrient-rich crops, and better water management systems, linking rural food production to urban supply chains.

## Climate and Disaster Resilience

We aim to reduce existing climate and disaster risks, avoid creating new risks and maladaptation, and strengthen climate and disaster resilience by enhancing local adaptation capacity, conserving natural resources, implementing nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based adaptation, and strengthening climate knowledge and local policy frameworks. Climate and disaster resilience is pursued both as a dedicated focus area and as a cross-cutting priority across all our interventions. Our efforts will target both rural areas and emerging towns: in rural areas, the focus will be on natural resource conservation and climate-resilient livelihoods, while in emerging towns we will support measures to address flooding, improve solid waste management, and promote circular and green economies.



## Bridges and Roads

Helvetas Nepal will continue transferring trail bridge technology to countries in the global south, expanding beyond Ethiopia. This initiative is grounded in South-South collaboration, encouraging shared learning and practical cooperation.



# SKILLS, JOBS AND INCOME

Helvetas Nepal has a strong track record in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and positions it as a key pathway for creating employment and income opportunities for disadvantaged groups. We aim to close the skills gap by aligning TVET with market needs and fostering decent employment for youth, emphasizing private sector collaboration for sustainable development. We also support inclusive enterprise development in climate-resilient, green sectors to enhance social and environmental impact.

**Outcome:** People, including those left behind and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), benefit from skill development and market systems contributing to a greener economy.

## Vocational Skills

Helvetas Nepal supports the institutionalization of TVET systems at all levels of government to enhance youth employability and income prospects, particularly for disadvantaged communities. We promote green skills and support green transition of the country. We facilitate private sector engagement to ensure youth receive quality, workplace-based training while enabling industries to access a job-ready workforce.



## Private Sector Development

Helvetas Nepal positions the private sector as a central actor in addressing economic exclusion, unemployment, and the transition to a greener and more resilient economy. We pursue Private Sector Development (PSD) as a core area of work, focusing on strengthening micro and small enterprises, inclusive market systems, and entrepreneurship pathways that expand income and decent work opportunities for disadvantaged groups, particularly in green and resource-based sectors. At the same time, Private Sector Engagement (PSE) is embedded as a strategic approach across the portfolio, shaping how Helvetas Nepal collaborates with companies, industry associations, and financial actors as development partners. Through PSE, we co-create solutions, leverage investment and expertise, and align business incentives with social and environmental objectives. By combining targeted PSD interventions with purposeful PSE, we seek to influence market systems and institutional practices so that private sector-led growth delivers public value and helps reduce structural inequalities.



## Sustainable Tourism

Tourism is a key sector for rural economic growth. Helvetas Nepal collaborates with federal, provincial and local governments and the private sector to promote sustainable, eco-friendly tourism that respects cultural heritage and natural resources while benefiting local communities. We focus on energy-efficient infrastructure, waste management, and training programmes for more inclusive and environmentally responsible tourism.



# VOICE, INCLUSION, AND COHESION

Helvetas Nepal strives for more equitable, inclusive, and just outcomes by enhancing governance and accountability, ensuring that marginalised communities benefit from improved services and rights. Gender and social equity, alongside advocacy, are organisational priorities.

**Outcome:** People, including the marginalised, contribute to and benefit from more equitable and inclusive societies.

## Governance and Civic Space

Helvetas Nepal will strengthen communities' ability to engage in political processes, support improvements in federal, provincial and local governance, and expand inclusive civic spaces where citizens – especially disadvantaged groups – can participate meaningfully. Alongside promoting transparency and accountability, we will support fiscal governance by helping local governments improve planning, budgeting, revenue management, and public financial accountability. Through this, we aim to encourage governance systems that are more responsive, equitable, and better aligned with citizens' needs.



## Urban Transformation

As internal migration and remittance flows continue to reshape rural–urban dynamics, emerging towns are becoming increasingly important drivers of Nepal’s economic growth. However, they face significant challenges, including unplanned expansion, weak and uneven urban services, limited economic opportunities, and growing

exposure to climate risks. Helvetas Nepal will focus on strengthening urban resilience, improving the quality, inclusiveness, and accountability of urban services, and supporting a more dynamic urban economy that creates decent work and income opportunities, particularly for youth. By analysing urbanisation dynamics in emerging towns and their surrounding hinterlands, we will strengthen rural–urban linkages and promote more balanced, inclusive, and sustainable development across both rural and urban spaces.



## Migration and Reintegration of Returnee Migrants

We will strengthen migration governance, protect migrant workers’ rights, and support more sustainable reintegration of returnee migrants. Our work will focus on linking returnees to skills development, financial literacy, entrepreneurship support, and local employment and business opportunities, with stronger engagement of the private sector as an employer, investor, and market actor. By working with enterprises, industry associations, and local market systems, we aim to translate migrants’ skills, experience, and capital into productive livelihoods and decent work at home. In parallel, we will reinforce government-led mechanisms to improve pre-departure, protection, and reintegration services, and strengthen coordination across federal, provincial, and local levels to address migration challenges more coherently and inclusively.



## OUR TRANSVERSAL THEMES 2025-2028

Across all working areas, we apply a set of transversal lenses that are embedded across programmes to strengthen coherence and impact. These lenses shape how we design, deliver, and adapt our initiatives. By applying them consistently across the portfolio, we enable integrated and forward-looking responses to Nepal's evolving social, economic, and environmental challenges.



### Climate Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction

Helvetas Nepal will strengthen climate and disaster risk resilience by addressing Nepal's high climate vulnerability and the growing climate induced stresses, disproportionately faced by marginalised communities. We will advance climate resilient agriculture, sustainable WASH, and natural resource conservation, while promoting green skills and broader green economy transitions. With growing risks from droughts, heatwaves, erratic rainfall, and other slow onset impacts, we will apply a disaster risk reduction and resilience lens across our work. Working with communities and local governments, we aim to reduce vulnerabilities, safeguard livelihoods, and use grounded evidence to inform policy dialogue for systemic resilience.

## **Addressing GESI with a Focus on Intersectionality**

By integrating Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) into all interventions, we aim to challenge systemic inequalities and empower marginalised groups. Our inclusive and transformative efforts will involve equitable resource allocation, active decision-making, and regular monitoring using a gender marker to drive equitable community growth. We will address intersectionality by tackling overlapping discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, disability, age, and other factors.

## **Leveraging Digital Transformation**

Helvetas Nepal will integrate digital tools, including mobile applications and online platforms, to streamline project planning, monitoring, and communications. By enhancing digital literacy, we will empower local communities to access vital information about government procedures, market data, and digital payment systems, fostering both economic and social development.

## **Engaging Youth in Development**

Given that youth make up a significant portion of Nepal's population, integrating them into development initiatives can yield transformative benefits. By equipping young individuals with essential skills, resources, and support, we enable them to start businesses, create employment opportunities, and drive economic growth. Helvetas Nepal is committed to engaging youth in governance, decision-making, and safer migration processes to contribute to their development and the nation's progress.

## **Strengthening Nepal's Federal Governance**

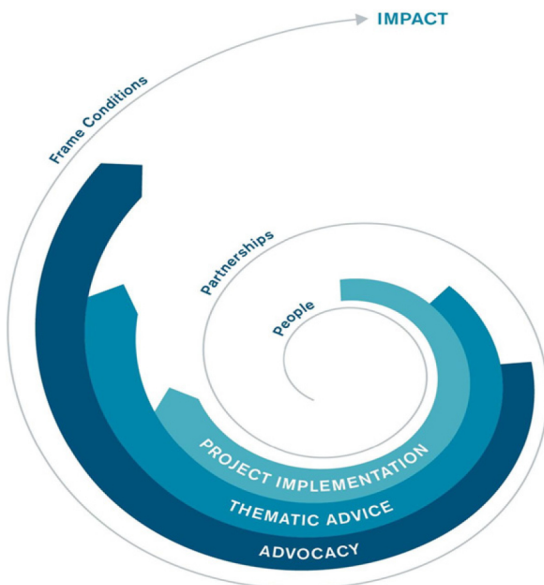
Helvetas Nepal is committed to strengthening Nepal's federal governance system by supporting sub-national governments in effectively assuming their constitutional mandates. We will align our projects with the principles of devolution, equity, and inclusivity, embedding these principles into our work. Through these efforts, we aim to ensure that Nepal's federal system becomes a transformative force for sustainable development.

# HOW WE ACHIEVE IMPACT

Helvetas Nepal employs three interconnected intervention mechanisms:

- implementing development and humanitarian response projects,
- providing technical expertise and building thematic capacities, and
- engaging in awareness-raising, policy dialogue, and advocacy.

Through this integrated approach, we drive systemic change to improve lives in both the short and long term, empower our partners, and foster enabling conditions for sustainable development.



## OUR KEY APPROACHES

### Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)

We promote political, social, economic, environmental, and cultural rights by empowering individuals and communities to claim their rights while supporting governments and local authorities to fulfil their obligations. Guided by the principles of universality and indivisibility, non-discrimination and equality, accountability and rule of law, and participation and inclusion, we integrate HRBA into the design, implementation, and evaluation of all our programmes, ensuring equitable and inclusive development.

## Humanitarian – Development Nexus

Helvetas Nepal will continue to advance its Humanitarian–Development Nexus approach, strengthening the link between immediate humanitarian assistance and long-term development efforts. By integrating emergency response interventions with innovative and systemic development initiatives, we aim to foster a more coordinated, inclusive, and sustainable approach to crisis management, ensuring the long-term resilience of communities.

## Localization and Partnership

Helvetas Nepal prioritises localization and partnerships as key drivers of sustainable development. By strengthening local leadership and building capacities, we foster local ownership and accountability for context-specific solutions. Collaborating with local governments, NGOs, and the private sector enhances institutional capacities, promotes inclusivity, and ensures active participation of marginalised groups. This approach not only builds resilient, self-reliant communities but also aligns seamlessly with Nepal’s federal structure.



## Evidence-based Knowledge and Practice (Praxis)

We strengthen evidence-based knowledge and practice (praxis) by collaborating with academic institutions to better connect learning with action. Through action research and structured learning exchanges, insights from our work help shape relevant research, while academic evidence informs and improves programme design and implementation. This continuous flow of knowledge enhances innovation, credibility, and adaptive learning across our work.



## Policy Engagement and Advocacy

Helvetas Nepal engages in policy dialogue and advocacy to strengthen systems, improve accountability, and promote more effective and inclusive public policies and practices. Grounded in evidence and learning from implementation, our advocacy is people-centered, constructive, and solution-oriented, reflecting the lived realities of communities we work with. We combine inside track engagement with government institutions at all levels with outside track collaboration through civil society networks and platforms, helping translate grassroots experience and practice-based insights into policy and institutional reform. Through dialogue, evidence, and learning, we contribute to stronger governance systems that are more responsive, transparent, and capable of delivering sustainable development outcomes.



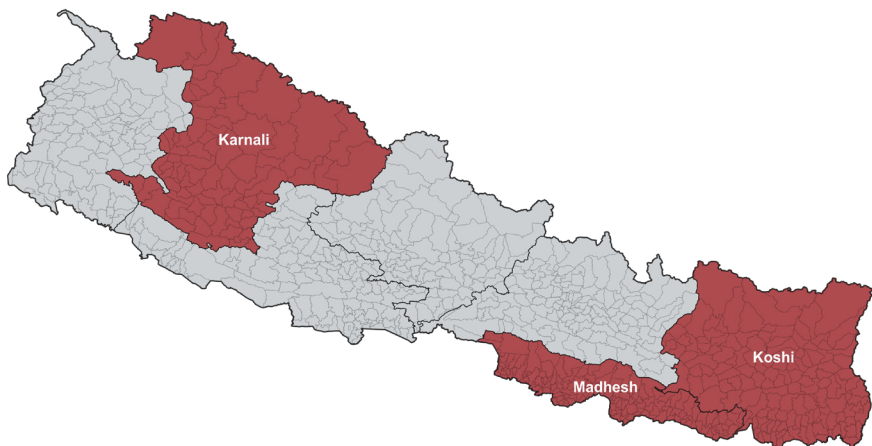


## Conflict Sensitivity

Helvetas Nepal integrates conflict sensitivity into all projects to prevent exacerbating tensions and to promote social cohesion. This involves understanding the political and economic context, including underlying imbalances; assessing how our actions impact this context; and adapting interventions to minimize harm while enhancing sustainability and effectiveness.

## WHERE WE WORK

Helvetas Nepal operates across Nepal through various programmes and projects, with a strategic focus in Koshi, Madhesh, and Karnali Provinces. These regions serve as innovation hubs where we develop and showcase impactful, scalable solutions that inspire broader adoption. While these provinces remain our priority, we remain flexible, adapting to donor priorities and emerging opportunities. Across all locations, we apply our core approaches, fostering synergies between key areas. Our work promotes integration across geographic regions, strengthens Nepal's federal governance, and enhances rural-urban linkages for inclusive and sustainable development.



# OUR COMMITMENT TO QUALITY

## Results-Based Management (RBM)

Aligned with our global approach, we use RBM as a tool for learning, steering, and accountability. We ensure that field staff and partners understand the broader vision and how their activities contribute to it. Our Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) system operates at all levels, emphasizing outcome and impact measurement to widely share stories of empowerment.

## Financial Management and Control

We uphold transparency, accountability, and efficiency in resource use. Our strong financial control system ensures compliance with audits from Helvetas, donors, and the national government. We strengthen local partnerships by building financial capacities and ensuring due diligence and compliance across all operations.

## People and Culture

Helvetas Nepal is committed to fostering a diverse, inclusive, and equitable work environment in line with our global Gender and Social Equity (GSE) Diamond, which guides our organisational culture, people management, and ways of working. We actively invest in young talent by providing opportunities for learning, growth, and leadership development. Through inclusive leadership practices, fair and transparent human resource systems, and family-friendly working conditions, we empower staff to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to our mission. A team-oriented culture and participatory decision-making remain central to how we work, strengthening accountability, wellbeing, and organisational performance.

## Programme Synergy and Complementarity

We promote stronger synergy across our programmes to maximise collective impact. By aligning objectives, sharing learning, and integrating complementary interventions, we ensure coherence across sectors and geographies, enabling more effective responses to complex development challenges and deeper, sustained change.



## Learning and Innovation

We nurture a culture of learning that creates safe spaces for critical reflection and encourages us to learn not only from our successes but also from failures as opportunities for growth. By capturing and sharing insights across teams, we strengthen collective intelligence and drive continuous improvement. We also translate these learnings into innovative practices and share them externally to contribute to sector-wide progress and inspire collaborative change.



## Contribution to wider Helvetas Organisation

Helvetas Nepal will progressively strengthen its contribution to the wider Helvetas by leveraging its experience and growing pool of technical expertise. As staff increasingly engage in global advisory roles, and as Helvetas wide functions are embedded within the country programme, Nepal serves as a trusted space for cross country learning and organisational collaboration. We will further enable this contribution through investment in people, systems, and organisational capacities, allowing Helvetas Nepal to play a stronger enabling role while ensuring that global engagement enhances overall quality and learning and remains well aligned with country programme priorities.

# MANAGING RISKS

## Fragile and Evolving Context

Nepal's federal governance system is still evolving, with ongoing challenges related to institutional capacity, coordination, and fiscal sustainability. Helvetas Nepal actively manages these risks by designing context sensitive programmes, strengthening coordination across federal, provincial, and local levels, and supporting governance arrangements that uphold the principles and intent of federalism.



## Safety, Security, and Ethical Conduct

Helvetas Nepal strictly adheres to Nepal's Basic Operating Guidelines (BOGs), endorsed by the Swiss Embassy and the INGO community. Drawing on experience from Nepal's conflict and post conflict periods, we continuously adapt risk-informed tools and practices to operate safely and responsibly in fragile settings. We uphold the highest ethical standards, with zero tolerance for social discrimination, sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment, violence, and financial misconduct.

## Civic Space and Operational Environment

Recognizing increasing pressures on civic space, Helvetas Nepal engages constructively with civil society organisations, media, and other stakeholders to strengthen credibility, trust, and public dialogue. Through responsible engagement and evidence based communication, we contribute to an open and enabling environment for civic participation and development action.

## Proactive Risk Management

We maintain and regularly update risk registers covering governance, security, operational space, funding, and political dynamics. Using structured assessment and scoring criteria, risks are systematically monitored and mitigated, enabling informed decision making, strengthening accountability, and safeguarding the effectiveness and integrity of our interventions.








 **CONTACT US**

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