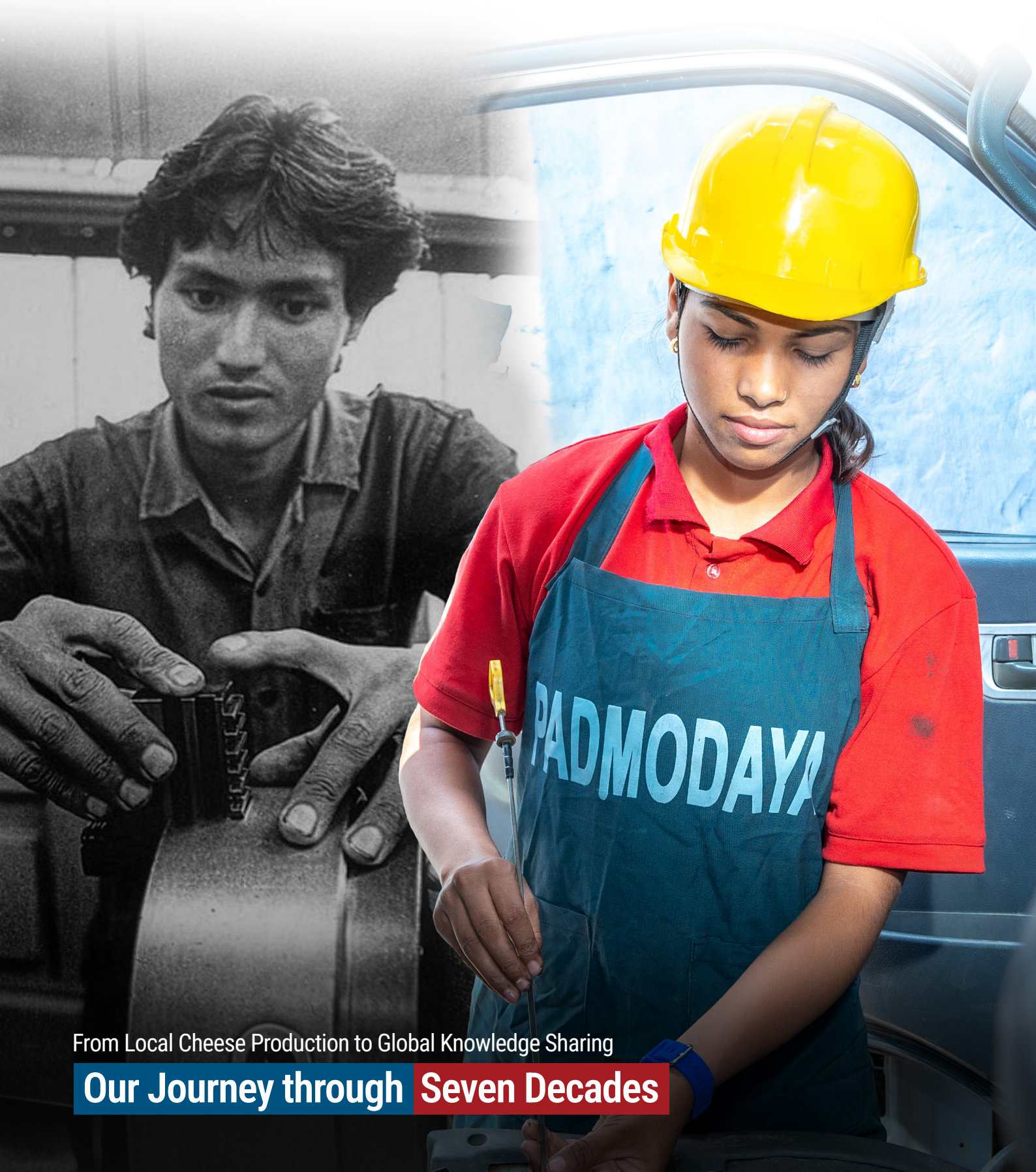


HELVETAS Chautari

Special Edition on **70 Years of Helvetas** in Nepal



From Local Cheese Production to Global Knowledge Sharing

Our Journey through Seven Decades

Message from Koshi Province



HIKAMT KARKI
Chief Minister
Koshi Province

हेल्भेटासले नेपालमा काम गर्न सुरु गरेको ७० वर्ष पुगेको सुखद अवसरमा संस्थाको उत्तरोत्तर प्रगतिको कामना गर्दै हार्दिक बधाई तथा शुभकामना व्यक्त गर्दछु।

सन् १९५६ मा नेपालमा चिज उत्पादनबाट सुरु गरेको सहकार्यको यात्रा आजसम्म आइपुग्दा नेपालको सामाजिक रूपान्तरण र विकासमा यो संस्थाले खेलेको भूमिका अतुलनीय र प्रशंसनीय छ।

नेपालको ग्रामीण सडक तथा झोलुङ्गे पुल निर्माणमार्फत ग्रामीण क्षेत्रमा पुर्‍याएको विकास पहुँच, आर्थिक र सामाजिक सशक्तिकरण, सीप विकास खानेपानी तथा सरसफाई र पर्यटन प्रवर्धन र पर्यटन विकासमा हेल्भेटासले महत्वपूर्ण काम गरेको छ। सुरक्षित वैदेशिक रोजगारी र विदेशबाट फर्केका श्रमिकहरूको पुनर्करण र अन्य धेरै सामाजिक क्षेत्रमा यसले काम गरेको छ।

२०७२ सालमा नेपालको संविधान निर्माणसँगै संघीयताको कार्यान्वयन र यसको विकासका लागि निकै राम्रो काम गरेको छ। विशेषगरी कोशी प्रदेशमा स्थानीय सरकार र प्रदेश सरकारबीच समन्वय र सहकार्य सुदृढ गर्न आपतकालीन सेवा केन्द्र, फोहोरमैला व्यवस्थापन, ग्रामिण पदमार्ग पर्यटन विकास, सीप विकास सुरक्षित आप्रवासन, वैदेशिक रोजगारीबाट फर्किएका नागरिकहरूको पुनर्एकीकरणका साथै स्थानीयतहको सेवा क्षेत्रमा भएका कामहरू साझेदारीको उत्कृष्ट नमुना हुन्।

यस महत्वपूर्ण अवसरमा हेल्भेटास नेपाललाई पुनः हार्दिक बधाई व्यक्त गर्दै आगामी दिनहरूमा पनि संघीयताको सुदृढ कार्यान्वयन तथा दिगो विकासका विविध क्षेत्रमा अझ प्रभावकारी योगदान पुर्‍याउँदै जाने विश्वास व्यक्त गर्दछु।

धन्यवाद।

Message from the Embassy of Switzerland



DR. DANIELLE MEUWLY
Ambassador of
Switzerland to Nepal

It is with great pride and reflection that I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Helvetas on its 70th anniversary of dedicated engagement in Nepal. This special edition of *Helvetas Chautari* provides a valuable opportunity to celebrate a remarkable journey closely intertwined with Nepal's development and Switzerland's longstanding partnership with the country.

Over the decades, the collaboration between the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Helvetas has been defined by mutual trust, shared values, and a strong commitment to inclusive and sustainable development. Helvetas has grown into a reliable partner, strengthening communities, enhancing local institutions, and creating opportunities that promote dignity and resilience.

These years have also witnessed significant transformations within Nepal and in the global development landscape. As contexts evolve, so too must our approaches. Today's challenges call for continued reflection, adaptability, and renewed commitment.

In this regard, institutions like Helvetas carry both experience and responsibility. Their strength lies not only in a rich legacy, but also in the ability to listen, innovate, and remain responsive to the aspirations of a changing Nepal, particularly its younger generations.

Helvetas is more than an implementing agency to us—it is a trusted partner with whom we share a longstanding relationship. I am confident that it will continue to play a vital role in shaping Nepal's development journey.

On behalf of the Embassy of Switzerland, I extend my warm congratulations and best wishes for the future.

Message from Helvetas Switzerland



JÖRG FRIEDEN

Member of the Board
of Directors
Helvetas

Nepal has been for me and for many Swiss friends of older and younger generations the space of lasting friendships and of productive professional engagements.

Over the period of the last 70 years, Helvetas has often created the space, the opportunities and the friendships that have made this experience so rich and rewarding. My memories are marked by suspension bridges, rural roads, migrants in search of a better life, women and men working hard on steep hills, young people acquiring essential skills. They include the best hopes and the worst fears: political struggles, armed conflicts, victims of violence and builders of peace, the popular movement for democracy, the first free and open elections, the search for reconciliation, peace and decentralized democracy.

I have experienced in Nepal the best moments of my professional life, thanks to an effective dialogue and collaboration with local authorities and ministerial staff. In private I have learnt to appreciate and respect the porters carrying my luggage to the beautiful mountains.



Nepal has been a teacher, a demanding friend, a space of responsibilities and of many professional and personal satisfactions.

I am grateful to its people that has always received me as a friend.



MELCHIOR LENGSFELD

Executive Director
Helvetas

Helvetas marks 70 years of partnership, innovation and impact in Nepal. Since 1956, this engagement has been guided by a shared vision: a just and prosperous society where women and men can shape their lives with dignity and security.

Working closely with communities and government, civil society and the private sector, Helvetas has continuously adapted to changing needs while reaching millions of people across the country's diverse regions. We stand in deep gratitude for the manifold partnerships which have been at the core of this extraordinary journey.

From supporting the construction over 10,000 trail bridges—improving access to education, health and markets—to advancing skills development, sustainable agriculture, water management and inclusive economic opportunities, Helvetas Nepal has consistently combined innovation with long-term commitment. A defining strength has been the development of local capacities and nationally owned solutions, many of which have inspired programmes worldwide.



This anniversary is both a celebration of past achievements and a reaffirmation of Helvetas' commitment to inclusive, resilient development in Nepal—driven by strong partnerships and the dedication of its people.

THE CHRONICLE OF EVOLUTION: **HELVETAS**

Nepal holds a special place in Helvetas' history as its very first partner country, serving as the launchpad for a global journey in international development cooperation.



1949

The ETH Proposal

The Swiss government forwarded Nepal's request to the Technical University of Zurich (ETH). ETH proposed sending a small team for 1–2 months to map out clear development tasks.



1951

The Blueprint for Progress

Following their rapid assessments, the Forward Team submitted a report declaring agricultural development as the cornerstone of Nepal's progress. They recommended focusing on livestock/dairy, trail bridges, hydropower, and people-centered governance.

1965

A Historic Identity Shift

To better fit its identity and mission, the organization changed its name to **Helvetas**.



Historical information compiled from Helvetas archives and project documentation

1948

A Formal Request for Aid

Nepal's Development Board, under Rana Prime Minister Mohan Shamsher, formally approached the Swiss government to request development assistance.



1950

Arrival of the "Swiss Nepal Forward Team."

On October 29, 1950, a team of Swiss experts arrived in Nepal. The team included:

- Walter Custer (Architect, Regional Planner & Team Leader)
- Toni Hagen (Geologist),
- Emil Rauch (Agronomist)
- Alf de Spindler (Civil Engineer)

Dairy specialists Werner Schultess and Ernst Siegenthaler later joined the team to complement field studies.



1955

From an Informal Group to SHAG



Inspired by their field experience in Nepal, enthusiastic Swiss citizens (including members of the Forward Team) met at the Hotel Limmathaus in Zurich on June 18, 1955.

They established **SHAG** (Schweizerisches Hilfswerk für außereuropäische Gebiete / Swiss Aid Organization for Non-European Regions).

Led by President Ludwig Groschupf and Vice President Regina Kaegi Fuchsmann, this marked the official creation of Switzerland's very first non-governmental organization for international cooperation.



2011

Global Merger

Helvetas merged with another prominent Swiss entity, Intercooperation, to establish the unified entity known today as **HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation**.





FACTS YEARS



From Blueprint to Establishing Helvetas in Nepal



THE FIRST COUNTRY

In 1956, Helvetas chose Nepal as the first country of international cooperation.

2

The Blueprint Document

The journey formally began with the signing of the first development program document.

3

A Shared Birthday

The year Helvetas initiated its program is the same year Nepal–Switzerland established diplomatic relations.

4

The Unique SATA Alignment

In 1970, Helvetas and the Swiss Government agreed to operate under a single name, “Swiss Association for Technical Assistance (SATA)” in Nepal

5

The Rolling Agreement

In 1988, Helvetas and the Government of Nepal signed a long-term rolling cooperation agreement.

6

A Founding Member of AIN

Helvetas is one of the founding members of the Association of International NGOs in Nepal (AIN).



Founding Nepal's Dairy Industry

7

The Cheese Pioneer

Joseph “Sepp” Dubach came to Nepal as the first expert to support the cheese industry in 1956.

BUILDING THE DAIRY SECTOR



Helvetas and FAO contributed in establishment of cheese dairies and milk collection systems that later evolved into the Dairy Development Corporation.

9

The First Integrated Project

The 1958 Dairy Development Project grew into the Jiri Multipurpose Development Project, Nepal's first integrated rural development program.



Skills Ecosystem Development

10

Forging the First Mechanics

Supported the establishment of Balaju Yantra Shala and Mechanical Training Center, producing Nepal's first mechanics, plumbers, and electricians in 1959.

11

Mobile Skills Training

The Skill and Know-how Imparted at Local Level (SKILL) Project, launched in 1992, delivered vocational training to remote communities through mobile camps.

12

Franchising Skills Training

The Franchising-SKILL (F-SKILL), initiated in 2002, pioneered an outcome-based payment and franchising structure for vocational training providers



Skills Ecosystem Development



THE EMPLOYMENT FUND

In 2008, Helvetas' Employment Fund was established to provide gainful employment opportunities to disadvantaged, unemployed, and out-of-school youth.

14 SEIS Initiative

In 2011, the Skills Development and Employment for the Informal Sector (SEIS) project expanded skills and employment opportunities in the informal economy for disadvantaged young women and men.

15 ENSSURE Apprenticeships

The Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment (ENSSURE) introduced Nepal's first formal dual VET-apprenticeship model in 2016.

16 SAMRIDDHI Support

In 2017, the Rural Enterprises and Remittances Project (RERP/SAMRIDDHI) provided technical assistance to deliver vocational training and apprenticeships to facilitate economically poor youth with decent jobs.



One Bridge to 10,000+ for Connectivity and Change

17 The Marsyangdi Milestone

The first pedestrian trail bridge was built across the Marsyangdi River in 1960.

18 Institutionalizing Bridges

Technical support helped establish Nepal's Suspension Bridge Division in 1964.

19 Going Long Span

The Suspension Bridge Project (SBP) introduced long-span trail bridges in 1973.

20 Decentralizing Bridges

The Bridge Building at Local Level (BBLL) program transferred bridge-building skills directly to local communities from 1989.

21 The TBSSP Merger

In 2001, the SBP and BBLL were merged into the unified Trail Bridge Sub-Sector Program (TBSSP)

22 The 1,000th Bridge Milestone

In 2002, the completion of the 1,000th trail bridge marked over four decades of bridge-building initiative.

23 Adopting National Strategy

Nepal institutionalized trail bridge standards through the National Trail Bridge Strategy in 2006.

24 The SWAp Transformation

In 2009, the Trail Bridge Sector-Wide Approach (TB-SWAp) Framework was implemented.

25 Bridging the Global South

The South-South Cooperation Unit (SSCU) began sharing Nepal's trail bridge expertise internationally in 2011.



THE 10,000TH BRIDGE EPIC

The construction of the 10,000th trail bridge in November 2023 cemented Nepal's status as a global model for community-led connectivity

27 Advisory Services

In 2025, Helvetas secured USD 18.2 million to construct 600 trail bridges in Ethiopia.



Green Roads for Sustainable Transport Solutions

INVENTING THE GREEN ROAD

In 1986, the Local Road Improvement Program piloted labor-intensive, eco-friendly techniques, giving birth to the "Green Road" concept.





Green Roads for Sustainable Transport Solutions

29

The UNDP Alliance

In 1994, the Pilot Labor-based Road Improvement Project expanded eco-friendly rural road construction in partnership with UNDP.

30

Rural Access Consortia

The Green Road concept was scaled through multi-agency programs from 2001 to expand rural road networks.

31

The LIRA Project

In 2004, the Local Initiatives and Rural Access (LIRA) project was launched to improve access to markets and services for disadvantaged communities in Terhathum.

THE DTMP PROJECT

In 2008, the District Transport Master Plan (DTMP) project was initiated for revising and updating the approach manual and for the preparation of District Transport Master Plans in seven districts.



Transforming Water Systems

33

Bringing Clean Water

In 1976, Helvetas expanded safe drinking water access through the Community Water Supply and Sanitation Project in partnership with UNICEF.

34

The SRWSP Launch

In 1992, the Self-Reliant Water Supply Support Program (SRWSP) strengthened community management of water systems.



35

The WARMP Innovation

In 2001, the Water Resource Management Program (WARMP) pioneered a holistic approach to water management systems and the Water Use Master Plan (WUMP) methodology.

36

The RVWRMP Collaboration

In collaboration with the Rural Village Water Resource Management Program (RVWRMP), Helvetas supported WUMP implementation across Karnali and Sudurpaschim.

37

Highland Water Governance

In 2012, the Building Effective Water Governance in the Asian Highlands, a research project, strengthened water resource management and water governance in the Asian Highlands, including the Melamchi area in Nepal.

THE IWRMP INITIATIVE

Since 2016, the Integrated Water Resources Management Program (IWRMP) has continued the promotion of sustainable, inclusive, and climate-resilient water resource management in Karnali and Sudurpaschim provinces.



Advancing Climate and Disaster Resilience

39

Introducing Blue Schools

In 2011, the Community Practice in Schools for Learning Climate Change Adaptation Project brought climate education and adaptation practices directly into schools.

40

Turning Bioenergy into Jobs

In 2014, BioEnergy project scaled up biomass energy production to lower carbon emissions while simultaneously creating local employment.

41

Skills for Reconstruction

In 2015, the Employment Fund-Skills for Reconstruction Project equipped youth with earthquake-resistant construction skills, linking recovery with employment.



Advancing Climate and Disaster Resilience



EARTHQUAKE RESILIENT REBUILDING

Following the devastating 2015 earthquake, Helvetas launched several initiatives that supported resilient reconstruction and economic recovery in Sindhupalchok.

43 Rebuilding Western Nepal

In 2024, the Skills and Reconstruction Project trained locals to rebuild their communities for long-term recovery.

THE KSHAMATA INITIATIVE

In 2026, Helvetas' flagship program for climate and disaster resilience has been launched.



From Soil Health to Food Security

45 Agriculture as an Integral Intervention

Agriculture has remained a core component across numerous integrated development programs.



FARMING ON RIVERBEDS

In 2007, Riverbed Farming created opportunities for landless and flood-affected communities to cultivate previously unusable land.

46 Nurturing the Soil and Farmer-to-Farmer Extension

In 1999, the Sustainable Soil Management Program (SSMP) promoted soil fertility through environmentally friendly practices.



THE COFFEE PROMOTION

Coffee value chain development began through the Coffee Promotion Project in 2003.

50 Nutrition in Mountains

In 2015, the Nutrition in Mountain Agro-Ecosystems Project promoted nutrition-sensitive agriculture in mountain regions.

51 NASDP/Prayas

In 2016, the Nepal Agriculture Service Development Project (NASDP/Prayas) improved income, food security, resilience, and social inclusiveness among disadvantaged farming households.

52 The Walnut Initiative

In 2018, the Strengthening Walnut Value Chain in Nepal Project strengthened Nepal's walnut value chain to enhance production and marketing.

53 Agroecological Food Security

In 2022, the Improving Food and Nutrition Security of Smallholder Farmers through Agroecological Approaches Project advanced agroecological solutions to food insecurity.



Innovation and Global Recognition

54

Development Market Award

Helvetas received the Development Market Award from World Bank in 2008.

55

The Voice of Farmers

Helvetas' agricultural innovation won the Farmers Voice Innovation Award in 2010.

56

Tech for Mountain Development

In 2014, Helvetas Nepal won ICIMOD's prestigious "ICT for Mountain Development Award".



A journey of Governance and Empowerment

57

The Taragaon Connection

Collaborated with Nepal Mahila Sangathan to manage the historic Taragaon Hotel in 1967.



ASSISTING FEDERALISM

In 2018, the Interim Capacity Support for Federalism Project strengthened local governments' ability to deliver public services. Since 2024, the Provincial Support Program has been supporting efforts to address challenges in the federal governance system in Koshi Province.

58

The Beginning of NGO Partnership

Helvetas introduced the Self-Reliance Development of the Poor by the Poor (SDPP/Swabalamban) in partnership with the local NGO, Integrated Development System in 1985.

59

Community Mobilization

Community participation became the core of local infrastructure planning and implementation since 1988 through the Palpa Development Program.

61

Peacebuilding in Conflict

Helvetas supported several relief, peacebuilding, and recovery initiatives in Mid- and Far-Western Nepal during the conflict years.

62

Mandatory Transparency

Public Audit Practice, introduced in 2004, strengthened transparency and accountability.

63

Third-Party Accountability

In 2011, the Citizen Actions for Results, Transparency and Accountability Project empowered civil society organizations to conduct independent, third-party monitoring of seven World Bank-financed projects in Nepal.

64

Youth in Governance

In 2022, the Promotion of Youth Engagement in Local Governance Project promoted youth participation in local governance.

65

SheLeads

Since 2025, SheLeads: Skills and Empowerment Project aims to dismantle systemic and legal barriers faced by young women and girls in governance and civic participation.



Safeguarding Migration and Reintegration

66

Making Migration Safer

The Safer Migration Program has helped make labor migration safer for Nepali workers since 2011.

67

Reintegrating Returnees

The Reintegration of Returnee Migrants Project has been helping returnee migrant workers plan their return and reintegrate smoothly into local economies since 2022.



Growing Enterprises and Tourism

68 The Birth and Growth of Elam

The Informal Sector Entrepreneurship and Employment Promotion (Elam) program, launched in 1998, has expanded over time, promoted enterprise development, jobs and inclusion in collaboration with private enterprises and Chambers of Commerce

69 InElam Enterprise Launch

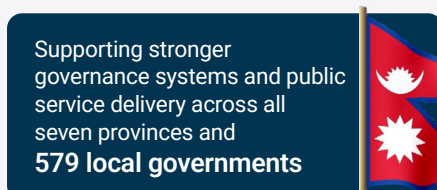
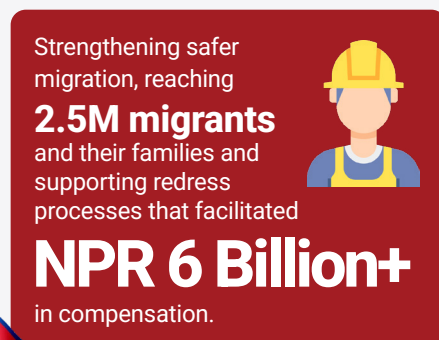
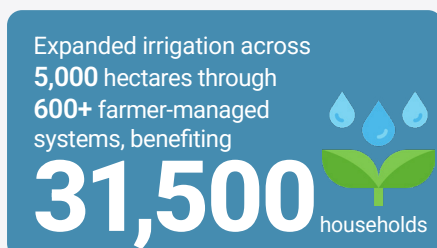
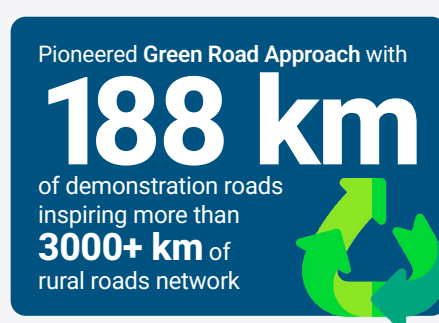
Since 2021, the Innovation in Enterprise Development and Job Creation (InElam) has focused on market-driven enterprise development by fostering innovation, local value chains and small businesses.

70 Trail-Based Tourism

Since 2024, the Trail-based Tourism Development Project has been promoting eco-friendly tourism trails and local economic development in Koshi Province.

A Legacy of Impact and Achievement Together with our Partners

From an annual outreach of few hundreds in the initial years...



...to over 1 Million in 2025!

Honouring 70 Years of Change, Collaboration & Commitment



Helvetas Nepal marked its 70th anniversary on 18 June 2026 with a vibrant celebration reflecting its long-standing journey of partnerships, innovation, and impact.

by a message from the Executive Director, emphasizing continued commitment to inclusive development and local solutions.



A highlight of the event was the prize distribution and showcasing of creative contributions, including slogans, photographs, and impact stories presented through poems and posters. Remarks from the Continental Coordinator for Asia further reinforced the global perspective and regional collaboration of Helvetas.

Voices from different provinces were also featured, showcasing diverse experiences and impacts across Nepal. The event concluded with a lunch gathering and cultural program, celebrating the rich traditions of Nepal and the collective achievements of Helvetas and its partners.

The anniversary served as both a reflection on the past and a celebration of the enduring partnerships that continue to build a better Nepal.

The program began by watering plants and trees, representing growth and sustainability, followed by a welcome address from the Country Director. A seven-minute video presentation highlighted Helvetas Nepal's seven decades of work and achievements across the country.

The celebration continued with a reflective session where current and former staff shared memories and insights from the organization's 70-year journey. This was followed



Celebrating Creativity & Impact

Winners of Different Competitions.

POEM

७० वर्षे तन्नेरीलाई

हिजोअस्ति गाउँतिर जाँदा,
झोलुङ्गे पुल तर्दै गरेका
विद्यार्थीहरूले तिमीलाई सम्झँदै थिए।

अलिमाथि धारोमा पानी भर्दै गरेकी आमाले
आशीर्वाद सुनाइदिनु भनेकी छिन्।
जवानिमा हरित सडक खनेका बुवाको
नमस्ते छ रे।

सिप सिकेर देशमै काम गर्ने युवा,
जोर्डनमा काम गरेर फर्केकी युवती,
हरित व्यवसायी महिलाहरू,
केही जाँगरिला युवाहरू
सबैले तिमीलाई न्यानो माया पठाएका छन्।

उनीहरू सबैसँग तिमीपनि सँगै थियौं रे नि।
हेर्दा अझै तन्नेरी देखिन्छ्यौ, पत्याउने गाह्रो -
७० वर्षकी पो भइसकिन्छ्यौ।

NIRAJ ACHARYA

SLOGAN

**Partnerships for People.
Progress for Nepal.**

BADRI MANANDHAR

PHOTOGRAPHY



Standing strong with the self-made reusable sanitary pads.

SANJU SHRESTHA

POSTER DESIGN



DURGA BHATTA

Voices of Legacy

Reflection from those who shaped Helvetas journey

A few words

Over the years Helvetas has proven itself to be a reliable partner to Nepal in its work with both civil society and government partners as well as directly with community groups. I was very fortunate to be able to play a small part in this work and was always impressed by the spirit and commitment of the staff with whom I worked.

Worthy of mention are the Trail Bridge programmes covering the

whole country, the training centres in Kathmandu, the district level support programme in Palpa, amongst others, in the 1980's. Building on experience gained in these years a cluster of diverse and innovative programmes were developed during the 1990's and many of them continue until today.

I wish Helvetas Nepal and all that sail in her, a very happy anniversary.



NEIL WALTON
Country Director
1995 - 2004

A first for Helvetas Nepal



RAM PRASAD RISAL
Country Director
2003 - 2008

I joined Helvetas Nepal in 1993 as Deputy Country Director and became Country Director in 2003—the first national staff member to hold the role in 50 years of Helvetas. I later served as Country Director in Mali and Ethiopia, setting a precedent Helvetas continues to follow to date.

Key memorable highlights during my tenure of Country Director in Nepal included: securing a six-year Strategic Partnership with DFID Nepal allowing unrestricted funding to up scale the Country Programme; initiating the Employment Fund programme and expanding its outreach with the World Bank funding; winning the World Bank's 2008 Global Development Marketplace Award for scaling up the Riverbed Farming project; and launching South-South cooperation with Helvetas Ethiopia on trail bridge building. A major challenge was

remaining relevant and delivering programmes nationwide while ensuring safety and security of staffs and partners during the Maoist conflict.

Helvetas Nepal offered invaluable learning opportunities, made possible by dedicated staff, committed partners, and supportive colleagues at headquarters. I remain deeply grateful to all of them. I extend special thanks to Hans Peter Schmidt, who recruited me; Neil Walton, who supported my leadership transition; and to Melchior Lengsfeld, Executive Director of Helvetas, who believed in me and championed my leadership transitions across Helvetas programme countries. Finally, Congratulations Helvetas Nepal for the 70 years of untiring, dedicated and continuous support to Nepal.

A fulfilling chapter

The five years I served as Country Director of Helvetas Nepal (April 16, 2009 – July 31, 2014) stand out as the most fulfilling chapter of my 25+ years in the INGO sector. They were marked by growth, challenges, and deep professional satisfaction.

Although Helvetas Nepal was already well established, it reached new heights during this period. Our project portfolio expanded, geographical coverage widened, budgets grew, and our team became stronger and more dynamic. Among the many initiatives, the Safer Migration (SaMi) Project remains closest to my heart, as it became a vital support system for thousands of Nepali migrant workers seeking safety and dignity abroad.

What truly distinguished Helvetas Nepal was its strong connection with communities. Whether through building trail bridges, promoting sustainable soil management, supporting coffee farming, river belt agriculture, or advancing skills development, our work created tangible and lasting impacts. Communities saw Helvetas not just as a development actor, but as a trusted partner.

These achievements were made possible by an exceptional team, a strong organizational culture, and support from the Head Office. Introducing an annual staff salary review system was one of my proud contributions.



SHIVA PRASAD ARYAL

Country Director
2009 - 2014

I remain deeply grateful to colleagues, communities, donors, and the opportunity to serve Nepal meaningfully.

Bharat misses Helvetas



BHARAT POKHAREL

Country Director
2014 - 2021

I had the privilege of dedicating nearly two decades of my professional life to Helvetas, witnessing an important chapter of its journey in Nepal. In 2002, I joined Intercooperation as its first Nepali Team Leader. Looking back, it was a rewarding decision that opened the door to becoming part of the larger Helvetas family, where I later had the honor of serving as Deputy CD and CD until my retirement in 2021.

Although my academic foundation spans forestry, anthropology, and development studies, Helvetas became my most enriching university. It provided invaluable opportunities to learn and contribute across diverse fields, including local governance, sustainable natural resource management, agriculture, climate justice, technical education,

migration, humanitarian response, post-earthquake recovery, and enterprise development.

Most importantly, Helvetas deepened my understanding that meaningful development goes beyond improving livelihoods and physical infrastructure. It is equally about nurturing dignity, confidence, and emotional well-being, both within self and among the poor and marginalized communities we serve. Looking back, my years with Helvetas were deeply fulfilling, marked by continuous learning, professional growth, lasting friendships, and a strong sense of purpose. I deeply miss the organization and the many colleagues with whom I had the privilege to work and learn.

Walking down *memory lane*

My first day in Helvetas was party time, August 1st 1984: Swiss National Day celebration. Work began the next day.

I soon fell in love with the organisation, mainly because of the nature of Anni Guntli, a colleague and Ben Dolf, my boss.

The environment was exciting. The place would often come alive with constant flow of field-based expatriate personnel and their young families. And some Swiss spouses would engage in social work.

In May 1985, I made a trip to Dolakha for the inauguration of Lamosango-Jiri Road by Queen Aishwarya. Although excited to see the queen from close quarters, it was torturous, waiting for her in the sweltering heat.

Having begun its operation at Ekanta Kuna in 1956 as Swiss Association for Technical Assistance (SATA), and later joined by SDC, Helvetas ultimately started to work independently since 1988 as an NGO.



BHIM GHOTANE
Senior Executive
Secretary
1984 - 2017

Three mothers, one journey



**BHAGAT BAHADUR
BISTA**
Team Leader
1996 - 2017

I served Helvetas Nepal as a team leader on diverse projects i.e. LISP, LLINK, LILI and SSCU across Nepal from January 1996 to January 2017. My 21-year commitment was mainly driven by our shared value system. Growing up in a remote area, I witnessed hardship, inequality, and poor education, which inspired me to work for social change. After completing my MBA, I joined Helvetas and found its strong commitment to addressing these challenges aligned with my aspirations.

Helvetas focused on capacity building, disadvantaged communities, remote areas, gender equity, sustainability,

and transparent, need-based interventions. For example, irrigation projects prioritized small farmers, ensured women's leadership, and promoted income-generating farming.

At my farewell, I described having "three mothers": my biological mother, Helvetas Nepal, and my country, Nepal. I remain deeply grateful to Helvetas, its partners, colleagues, communities, and supporters for their lasting impact and dedication to Nepal's development.

More than a workplace



**SHILPA CHHETRI
SAHAKARI**

Projector
Coordinator
2005 - 2020

My journey with Helvetas Nepal represents one of the most significant and rewarding phases of my professional career. Over a period of nearly fifteen years, I progressed from the position of Social Development Officer to Project Coordinator, gaining extensive experience in local governance, institutional development, and community empowerment. This journey provided valuable opportunities to collaborate closely with local governments, development partners, civil society organizations, and community stakeholders across Karnali Province.

A particularly enriching aspect of my experience was leading and supporting initiatives aimed at strengthening local governance systems, promoting accountability, and enhancing the capacity of local institutions. The

organization's strong emphasis on participatory development, gender equality, and social inclusion significantly shaped my professional values and leadership approach.

The knowledge, skills, and professional values I developed at Helvetas Nepal laid a strong foundation for my career advancement. Building on these experiences, I currently serve as a Training Coordination Analyst within the Technical Assistance Team of the Provincial and Local Governance Strengthening Programme (PLGSP) under UNDP. The experiences, lessons, and professional relationships gained during my time at Helvetas continue to inspire and guide my commitment to inclusive, accountable, and effective development.

A culture of *trust* and *purpose*

When I joined Helvetas Nepal in 2016 as Programme Manager for the Food Security and Nutrition Programme, Nepal was going through a historic transition. The new Constitution had just been promulgated, federalism was taking shape, and Helvetas itself was embarking on a new strategic direction. It was a time of change, learning, and opportunity, and I felt privileged to be part of an organization with such a long and meaningful partnership with Nepal.

While I was closely involved in project reforms, thematic consolidation, and the shift towards a more programmatic and advisory approach, what remains strongest in my memory is the team and the culture. Across projects, districts, and provinces, colleagues were united by a shared commitment to improving the lives of women and men, especially those who were economically poor and

socially marginalized.

I was deeply inspired by the trust that Helvetas placed in its staff, its culture of shared leadership, and its emphasis on learning and collaboration. Despite diverse backgrounds and locations, there was a genuine sense of community, humility, and mutual respect. My years at Helvetas shaped me profoundly. They strengthened not only my management and leadership skills but also my belief that meaningful development happens when people work together with trust, purpose, and respect. Being part of the Helvetas family during this important chapter remains one of the most rewarding experiences of my professional journey.

As Helvetas celebrates 70 years of partnership with Nepal, I extend my heartfelt congratulations on this remarkable milestone. It is a



SUDHA KHADKA

Team Leader
2016-2021

celebration of decades of dedication, innovation, and positive impact in the lives of countless communities across the country. I wish Helvetas continued success in its mission and many more years of meaningful contribution to Nepal's development journey.

३ दशक भन्दा बढी समर्पित सेवाको एक झलक



Indu KC, Office helper (*Everyone's Indu didi*) has spent over three decades with Helvetas Nepal, a journey she never imagined would be this long but one that has felt like family. Starting work at a young age, she was proud to move into an office role from serving expatriate staff. Through both joyful moments and difficult times, especially after losing her husband, the support she received from colleagues meant everything to her. Their encouragement and support helped her raise and educate her daughters, which is her greatest pride today. Looking back, she feels grateful for the journey and believes Helvetas has endured because of its genuine commitment to people and communities.



हेल्भेटास नेपालमा काम सुरु गर्दा तपाईं कति वर्षको हुनुहुन्थ्यो?

काम गर्न त मैले १४ वर्षको उमेरदेखि नै सुरु गरेको हो। यहाँ काम सुरु गर्दा कति वर्षको थिएँ भन्ने याद भएन। २०२१ सालको जन्म हो मेरो, ३४ वर्ष भयो काम गरेको, अब हिसाब गर्नु न।

यहाँ काम सुरु गरेको सुरुवाती दिनहरूको सबैभन्दा विशेष सम्झना के हो?

पहिला SATA मा काम गर्ने विदेशी म्याडम को मा प्राइभेट हिसाबले काम गरेको थिएँ। अनि उहाँ गएपछि अर्को विदेशी बुढाबुढी आउनुभयो। मलाई प्राइभेट भन्दा अफिस मा काम गर्न मन छ भन्ने कुरा राखेको थिएँ र उहाँहरू नेपालबाट जाने बेला मलाई अफिस को काममा राख्दा धेरै खुशी लागेको थियो।

सुरुमा काम गर्दा तपाईंले यति लामो समय यही संस्थामा काम गर्नुहुन्छ भन्ने सोच्नुभएको थियो?

थिएन नि! केही थाहा थिएन। यति लामो समय काम गर्नु जस्तो लागेकै थिएन। मेरो काम मन पराएर मलाई काम दिइराख्नुभएको छ, त्यसमै खुशी छु।

हेल्भेटासमा धेरै पुस्ताका कर्मचारीहरूसँग काम गर्दाको अनुभव कस्तो रह्यो?

राम्रो लागिरहेको छ। सबैले माया गर्नुभएको छ। अहिलेसम्म कसैले नराम्रो वचन लगाउनुभएको छैन। दुःख-सुखमा एकदम साथ दिनुभएको छ। २०५९ सालमा मेरो श्रीमान् बित्नुभएको थियो। त्यतिखेर Neil Walton सर, रिसाल सर र मल्ल सरले धेरै साथ दिनुभयो अनि मद्दत पनि गर्नुभयो। त्यो समय म कहिल्यै बिर्सन सकिदैन। त्यसरी सहयोग गर्नुभएकोले होला, मलाई आजसम्म पनि घरभन्दा बढी अफिसको माया लाग्छ।

सहकर्मीहरू वा कार्यालयसँग सम्बन्धित कुनै विशेष रमाइला सम्झनाहरू छन्?

शिव सरले नारी दिवसको बेला घुम्न पठाउनुहुन्थ्यो, त्यो एउटा रमाइलो सम्झना भयो। अर्को भनेको भोटेकोशीमा २-३ रात बस्ने गरी गएको, अनि प्रविन सरको पालामा चितवन गएको पनि रमाइलो भएको थियो।

भान्सा र खानपानमा तपाईंले के-कस्ता परिवर्तन देख्नुभयो?

धेरै परिवर्तन भएको छ नि। हामी आफिस नै कति पल्ट सायौं। पहिला भन्दा धेरै सजिलो छ यहाँको भान्सा, खुल्ला पनि छ।

तपाईंको यात्रामा तपाईंलाई विशेष सहयोग वा प्रेरणा दिने व्यक्ति कोही हुनुहुन्थ्यो?

एकदम दुःख परेको बेला सहयोग गर्नुभएको Neil Walton सर, रिसाल सर, मल्ल सरहरू हुनुहुन्छ। निल सरले मेरो श्रीमान् बिर्दा, केही समस्या छ कि भनेर अफिसबाट दिनको एक पटक मेरो घरमा बुझ्न पठाउनुहुन्थ्यो। दुःखको बेला सहयोग गरेकोले होला, उहाँहरूको

याद आउँछ। त्यतिबेला मलाई साथ नभएको भए मैले आफ्ना छोरीहरूलाई राम्रो शिक्षा दिन सकिदैन थिएँ होला।

आफ्नो यात्रालाई फर्केर हेर्दा तपाईंलाई सबैभन्दा गर्व लाग्ने कुरा के हो?

मेरो छोरीहरूले पढ्न पाए, देश-विदेश जान पाए। अहिले आफ्नै खुदामा उभिएका छन्, त्यसैमा गर्व लाग्छ।

तपाईंको विचारमा, नेपालमा हेल्भेटास को ७० वर्षसम्म साझेदारी कायम रहनुको मुख्य कारण के होला?

राम्रो काम गरेकोले होला। समुदायलाई चाहिने राम्रो काम गरेकोले टिकेको जस्तो लाग्छ।

अन्त्यमा केही भन्न चाहनुहुन्छ?

हेल्भेटासले मलाई हरेक क्षणमा साथ दिएको छ। धेरै धन्यवाद भन्न चाहन्छु।

Supported from day *one.*

DEBAKI LUNGELI
Operations Officer



When I joined Helvetas Nepal as an Operations Officer, I was very excited to begin a new chapter in my professional journey as well as curious about the organization and its working culture. What I appreciate most is that I felt welcomed as a valued member of the team and loved the culture of mutual respect, encouragement, and collaboration.

At the time of joining, I was also pregnant but was not able to discuss during the recruitment process. However, on my very first day, I openly shared this important news with Human Resource team, my supervisor and the Country Director. What touched me deeply was the way they received this news with positivity, encouragement, and genuine care.

Their support made me feel valued not just as an employee, but as a person.



Rather than seeing my pregnancy as a challenge, they embraced it as a natural part of life and supported me wholeheartedly.

After working for only one and half months, I began my six months maternity leave. For many women, taking long leave so soon after joining a new organization could create feelings of uncertainty or concern about their professional future. However, I never felt insecure

about my role or my position within the organization. Helvetas Nepal truly provided a secure working environment where women are encouraged to thrive, regardless of circumstances.

My journey with Helvetas Nepal has shown me that when an organization genuinely values its people, it creates an environment where both individual and organization can flourish. I am proud to work for such organization which recognizes employees not only as professionals but also as individuals. As I move forward in my role at Helvetas Nepal, I will remain committed to contributing positively to the organization and supporting its mission.

Voices from Government



MR. BABURAM BHANDARI

Joint Secretary, Ministry of Youth, Labour, Employment

बिगत लामो समयदेखि बिभिन्न कार्यक्रम मार्फत नेपालको सामाजिक तथा आर्थिक विकासमा हेल्भेटासले पुर्याएको योगदान महत्वपूर्ण रहँदै आएको छ। सीप विकास, रोजगारी प्रवर्द्धन, सुरक्षित आप्रवासन तथा समुदायस्तरमा अवसर सिर्जना गर्ने क्षेत्रमा पुर्याएका यस्ता सहयोग प्रशंसनीय छन्। सुरक्षित आप्रवासन (सामी) कार्यक्रम यसको एक उदाहरण हो। आगामी दिनहरूमा पनि यस्ता सहकार्यहरू थप प्रभावकारी र परिणाममुखी हुँदै जाने विश्वास लिएको छु।



DIPIN DEB YADAV

Chairperson, Janaknandini
Rural Municipality, Dhanusha

In the past when any incident occurred during foreign employment, the family members had to travel all the way to Kathmandu to resolve the issues. This often wasted many days and required significant expenses. It was especially difficult for families with weak financial conditions. Ever since the ReMi project started, whenever any issue or incident arose, the project staff provided extensive support, and much of the work could be completed from local level. This is what I appreciate the most.

In addition, for people who returned from abroad, the municipality, through the REMI project, provided technological equipment and support. As a result, they were able to secure employment. Even now, under the REMI project, 75 people are being supported with technology and resources to help them become self-employed.

*Text extracted from video message provided by
the Chairperson in Maithali language*



BIMALA KHADLUK MAGAR

Deputy Mayor,
Lekbeshi
Municipality,
Surkhet

For the past eight years, our municipality has been working in close collaboration with Helvetas Nepal to improve water supply and sanitation. The impact on women has been particularly heartening. Instead of spending hours carrying water from rivers, they now have time to participate in community activities, engage in vegetable farming, and improve their nutrition.

Voices from Partners



BIRENDRA RAJ PANDEY

President, Confederation of Nepalese Industries

Skilled human resources play a vital role in increasing industrial productivity and lowering production costs. They also help in developing a more productive economy. In this context, CNI has been working closely with Helvetas through the SDC-funded ENSSURE project, particularly in the TVET sector, which has enhanced meaningful and stronger private sector engagement.



**Confederation of
Nepalese Industries**



PRABINA BHANDARI

Chairperson, Bagmati Welfare Society Nepal (BWSN)

Helvetas has been more than a development partner it has been a catalyst for innovation, collaboration and local empowerment. Since 2020, our partnership has been built on trust, shared values and a common vision for stronger communities through SaMi and now Hamro Sahar projects of Helvetas.



**Bagmati Welfare
Society Nepal**
Saralahi, Nepal | Estd. 2051



SURENDRA K. SHRESTHA, PHD

Founder/ Executive Director, Group of Helping Hands (SAHAS) Nepal

On behalf of SAHAS Nepal, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to Helvetas Nepal for its continued partnership and shared commitment to advancing community development across Nepal. Together, we are guided by the conviction that development is truly meaningful only when it reaches those who need it most, particularly socially excluded and marginalized communities. SAHAS Nepal remains dedicated to implementing community-led, evidence-based interventions that uphold the principles of accountability, transparency, and inclusiveness. We highly value this collaboration and look forward to strengthening our partnership to further promote sustainable, equitable, and transformative development outcomes for the communities we serve.



सहायोगी हातहरूको समूह (सहास) नेपाल
Group of Helping Hands (SAHAS) Nepal

Voices from Communities

For many years, family responsibilities took priority over my personal aspirations, and I never imagined I would have the opportunity to build a career doing something I truly love. The ECDF training equipped me with the knowledge and practical exposure to become an educator. I am now proud to contribute to shaping children's futures while building a brighter future for myself.

UMADEV KATUWAL

Early Childhood Development Facilitator (ECDF)
Apprenticeship Graduate, Koshi Province



Before the drinking water system was installed, I had to spend one to one and a half hours each day walking to the river to collect water. Water scarcity was severe, and at times, we did not even have enough water for basic sanitation and toilet use.

But now, it is a complete revolution! The water doesn't just come; it pours into our lives directly at our doorstep. Since the installation of the water system, my family's quality of life has improved significantly. With reliable access to water at my doorstep, I can adequately care for my cattle and buffaloes and grow vegetables such as potatoes, cauliflower, beans, and onions throughout the year.

The increased agricultural production has enabled my family to meet our household needs and earn additional income by selling surplus vegetables. As a result, the water system has reduced hardship, improved our livelihood, and enhanced the overall well-being of our household. I am very happy and satisfied with the positive changes drinking water system has brought to our lives.

SARASWOTI JAYAGADHI

User of a Dudhuli Jaidhan Solar Lift Drinking Water and Supply Scheme, Achham

"We had almost given up hope after 15 years, never imagining anything would come. The support we received felt like a blessing we never expected."

Sitam Yadav from Aurahi Rural Municipality-3 in Siraha passed away 15 years ago, and over time, his family had nearly forgotten about any potential compensation. With no expectation of financial support, the idea of receiving benefits from abroad had long faded. However, in a sudden and unexpected turn of events, the family received NPR 2,271,399 through the General Organization for Social Insurance (GOSI), bringing both relief and renewed hope.

The compensation was distributed among his immediate family members—his wife, Anita Devi Yadav, and their two sons, Ramesh and Mukesh Yadav—each receiving NPR 7,57,000.

ANITA DEVI YADAV

Wife of Sitam Yadav
Aurahi Rural Municipality, Siraha



Helvetas Nepal 7.0

**Honouring the Journey,
Embracing the Future.**

We live in a time of constant upgrades. Phones, software, even the way we work are always evolving. So, as we celebrate 70 remarkable years of Helvetas in Nepal, I find myself thinking of this moment as “Helvetas Nepal 7.0”.

For seven decades, Helvetas has walked alongside Nepal through many important journeys. From early work in cheese making to connecting communities through more than 10,000 trail bridges, from pioneering technical training at Mechanical Training Centre (MTC) to nurturing enterprises in coffee, banana, and more recently the circular economy, our work has continually evolved. We have contributed across WASH, safer migration, inclusive local governance, and have stood with communities in times of crisis, supporting response, recovery, and reconstruction. This legacy gives us pride, and a deep sense of responsibility.

Today, we work in a world that is changing far more rapidly than the one Helvetas first entered. The aspirations of Nepal’s young population for voice, opportunity, and a meaningful future at home sit at the heart of this change. Yet persistent employment challenges continue to push many abroad, even as climate induced disasters and livelihood losses become more frequent and severe. Remaining relevant in this context is precisely where Helvetas’ experience matters most.

“

***Helvetas Nepal
7.0 is about
building on our
past without being
constrained by it
and adapting with
pragmatism to
what lies ahead.***

Going forward, we will deepen our engagement in climate and disaster resilience, labour mobility, skills development, and economic inclusion, while maintaining the thematic breadth that has long been our strength. We will advance localisation through stronger partnerships with government, academia, and civil society, sharpen our engagement with the private sector, and continue to embrace regionalisation in an increasingly interconnected world.

Above all, Helvetas 7.0 is about people and culture. For seventy years, it has been the commitment, integrity, and sense of solidarity of our staff that have shaped our impact. This shared ethos continues to guide us. Our task now is to carry it forward through inclusive leadership, shared ownership, and ways of working that are fit for the future.



MANEESH PRADHAN

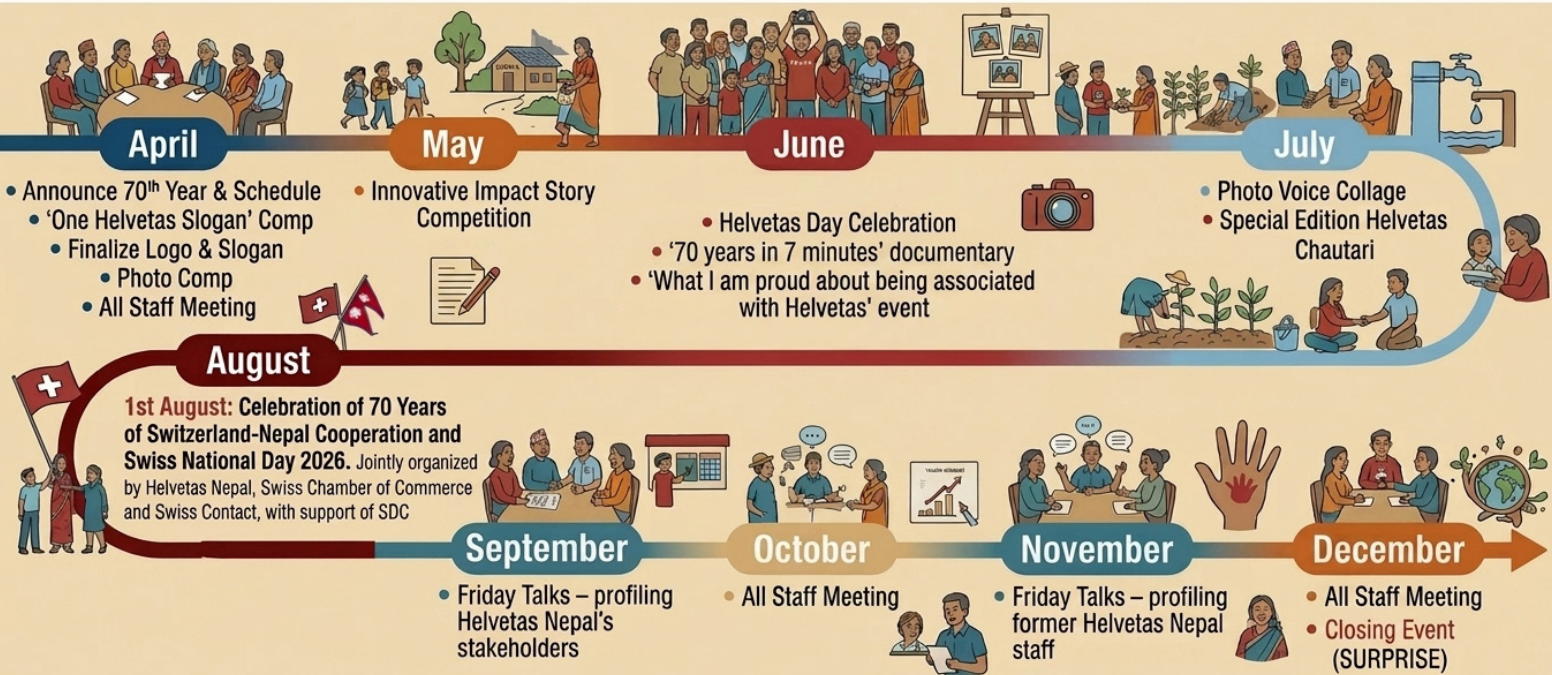
Country Director
HELVETAS Nepal

Seventy years on, the journey continues. We move forward with gratitude to the communities, governments, partners, donors, and colleagues who have walked this journey with us, and with confidence in what we can continue to build together for Nepal. We are particularly thankful to the SDC, whose enduring partnership and shared commitment to Nepal’s development have been an integral part of Helvetas’ proud journey in Nepal.



Helvetas Nepal – 70 Years Celebration Timeline

Celebrating our Shared Legacy (1956-2026)



Thank you for being part of HELVETAS Chautari

Just like a Chautari, a place where people gather to rest, reflect, and exchange ideas, we hope this newsletter offered stories that inspired thought, conversation, and connection. Your continued interest, feedback, and engagement motivate us to keep sharing voices and experiences from the ground.

Write to us at newsletter.np@helvetas.org

We would love to hear from you.

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