



HELVETAS
NEPAL

HELVETAS Chautari

A Newsletter of Helvetas Nepal

From Exclusion to Influence

Sarada Nepali, Jajarkot

A story from her journey, inside.

Picture: SAHAS Nepal

Issue 1 | January 2026



Welcome to the first edition of Helvetas Chautari!

In Nepali culture, a Chautari is a simple yet meaningful space – often under the shade of a tree – where people pause during their journeys, gather to exchange ideas, reflect on shared experiences, and find strength in conversation. This newsletter is our Chautari: a place to pause, listen, and connect. Here, we celebrate moments of change, learn from each other, and reflect on the work we do.

In the past year, Nepal has witnessed strong expressions of aspiration and concern from its young people. Globally, geopolitical shifts continue to reshape the development landscape.

These emerging realities encourage us to remain agile, to keep our work rooted in local realities, build solidarity and to be intentional about deepening and broadening our impact. Within these pages, you will find snapshots of people, partnerships, and ideas shaping change on the ground. Behind every story is the commitment of communities working towards opportunity and of partners who walk alongside them with purpose.

As we begin the new year, on behalf of Helvetas Nepal, I am grateful to share this first edition as part of our collective journey. Sincere thanks go to the communities we work with, our partners in government, the private sector, academia, civil society, our donors, and the wider Helvetas family for their trust and collaboration. Together, we are building pathways to resilience and hope.

Maneesh Pradhan

The turn of the year offers a chance to pause. As our work continues, we remain mindful of its impact on people and communities. May 2026 bring space for learning, reflection, and shared understanding.

Warm wishes to our colleagues, partners, donors and communities for the year ahead.



Happy
New Year

Water, Food and Climate

1

Advancing WASH Monitoring Through Experiential Water Insecurity Measures in Nepal

Our recently co-authored study, *"The Utility of Experiential Water Insecurity Measures for Monitoring and Evaluating WASH Programmes"*, examines the comparative value of observable service indicators and experiential data in the context of Nepal. This collaborative effort — undertaken with the support of the Integrated Water Resources Management Programme of Helvetas Nepal, charity: water, Northwestern University, and the University of North Carolina, USA — piloted the Household Water Insecurity Experiences (HWISE) Scale in Karnali Province.

The study reinforces the imperative to move beyond quantifying infrastructure such as taps and pipelines and to prioritize understanding how communities experience water access and insecurity. [Read More](#)

2

Bridging Knowledge, Connecting Communities: From Nepal to the Global South

From the hills of Nepal to communities across the Global South, Transformative Rural Access Catalysts for Change (TRAC4Change) is helping turn trail bridges into pathways for opportunity. This Helvetas division focuses on sharing trail bridge technology and institutional know-how to strengthen rural access and improve lives, demonstrating that valuable technical knowledge can travel both from the Global North as well as from one Southern context to another.

In Ethiopia, this work is already making a visible difference. Through continued support to the Transforming Rural Access for Improved Livelihoods (TRAIL) Phase II project, TRAC4Change is providing hands-on technical and institutional guidance. A Nepalese trail bridge expert based in the country is working closely with government engineers, consultants, and contractors—support that has so far helped deliver 135 trail bridges, connecting nearly 3.1 million people to services, markets, and opportunities.

The journey doesn't stop there. TRAC4Change's global footprint is expanding, with work underway in Afghanistan, a World Bank-supported initiative launched in July 2025. A demonstration project planned in Tanzania for January 2026 will further extend this shared learning — showing how locally rooted expertise can create global impact. [Read More](#)



140,000+ People with access to safe drinking water with 93% of tap-stands fully functional



1,055 Walnut producers received business development services



500+ masons trained in earthquake resilient construction and 413 participants certified through skill testing



Technical assistance provided for the construction of 135 trail bridges in Ethiopia, benefiting around 3.1 million people

Key Findings:

- Access to at-least-basic drinking water services increased from 60.8% to 100%, while moderate-to-high water insecurity declined from 18.3% to 1.4% in Helvetas Nepal working areas.
- Improvements were consistent across gender and age groups; however, district-level variations underscore the importance of localized solutions.
- Experiential indicators, such as the HWISE Scale, provide critical and actionable insights that extend beyond infrastructure-based measures.





From Exclusion to Influence: Sarada's Journey to Respect

At just 23 years of age, Sarada Nepali from Jajarkot has managed to change her life and quietly shifted the attitudes of her village. Once barred from the homes of so called "upper caste" families because of her Dalit identity, she now cooks, eats, and rejoices with the same families who once kept her out. Marriage at 17 and motherhood at 18 altered her path but not her resolve.

In 2022, Sarada found her footing through a women farmers' group, where learning about agroecology and leadership helped her grow in confidence. Chosen as the group's secretary, she earned trust through quiet commitment. Today, Sarada serves as a project manager for a major canal construction, an unlikely role for a young woman once pushed to the margins. Her journey reflects a steady reclaiming of dignity, respect, and voice.

Sarada is part of a women farmers' group supported by Improving Food and Nutrition Security of Smallholder Farmers through Agroecological Approach (FSAN) project implemented by SAHAS Nepal in collaboration with Helvetas Nepal and Fastenaktion.



Water Supply Scheme Solaces Pains of Blindness

Apsara Thapa, an 18-year-old blind girl from a village in Achham, has faced immense hardships, including losing her parents at a young age and growing up in economic difficulty. The lack of a drinking water system in her village forced her to rely on family and neighbors to fetch water from a well an hour away. This scarcity often left her enduring thirst when no one was available to collect water for her. The implementation of the Dharigad Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Scheme transformed Apsara's life by providing a tap stand at her home.

Funded by the Integrated Water Resources Management Programme under the charity: water Grant and Mangalsen Municipality, the scheme now serves 56 households, benefiting 349 people in Bhuntura. With direct access to clean water, Apsara can now independently meet her needs, maintain hygiene, and manage menstruation without relying on others. This scheme has granted her confidence, dignity, and autonomy, exemplifying how accessible infrastructure can empower disabled individuals in marginalized communities.

What We've Been Up To In

Skill, Jobs and Income

1

Lalitpur Launches Career Guidance Service Unit to Empower Youth Pathways



Lalitpur Metropolitan City marked a significant milestone with the inauguration of its Career Guidance Service Unit, established with support from the Swiss-funded Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment (ENSSURE) project.

The unit was formally launched in the presence of representatives from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Helvetas Nepal, local government officials, and school representatives. The Career Guidance Service Unit is designed to assist both in-school and out-of-school youth by facilitating psychometric self-assessments, helping them identify their interests and capacities, providing access to labor market information, and enabling informed career choices that lead to meaningful employment opportunities. At present, 11 municipalities have established Career Guidance Service Units, supported by provincial-level Career Guidance Service Centres operating across all seven provinces. To date, 580 schools have conducted career guidance sessions, benefiting nearly 64,600 students (55% girls) while an additional 13,800 around students have been reached through the online platform. Watch the [video](#).

3

InElam's Final Evaluation

The final evaluation of the Innovative Enterprise Development Project (InElam) (2021–2024) by Helvetas Nepal highlights key achievements and lessons. The project supported women, youth, and marginalized communities in Madhesh and Karnali to build enterprise-based livelihoods using a Market Systems Development approach. Here's the [snapshot](#).

Counting Changes



12,900+ youth enrolled in different TVET courses, 1100+ trainees certified, and 64,600+ students attended career guidance sessions



236 youth received business plan development training.



34 Trail User and Construction Committees formed, resulting in the rehabilitation/ construction of 21+ km trails, generating 24500+ person days of employment

2

ENSSURE Success Stories Launched

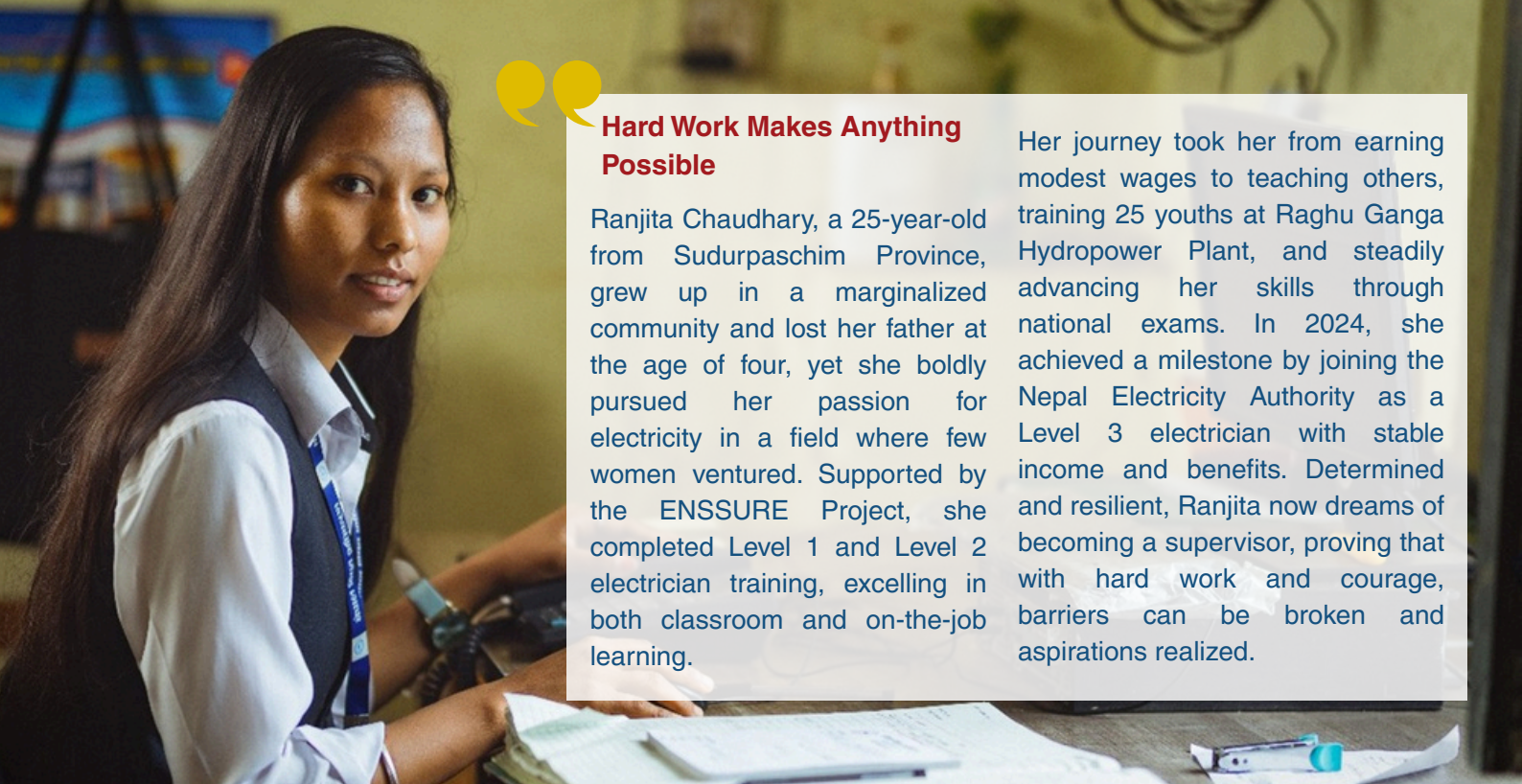


The Success Story Booklet under the Swiss-funded ENSSURE Project has been jointly launched by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT), SDC, and Helvetas Nepal. Featuring 20 inspiring stories of transformation, the booklet highlights ENSSURE's contribution to strengthening skills systems and improving employment opportunities for young people and institutions across Nepal. The stories reflect how sustained collaboration between government, development partners, and training institutions is creating more inclusive and rewarding employment opportunities for Nepal's youth. The booklet can be accessed [here](#).

Key Findings of Final Evaluations:

- A modest **8%** project investment catalyzed **92%** of enterprise financing from the private sector (**81%**) and local governments (**11%**)
- **1,769** New enterprises established
- **5,140** Direct Jobs Created





Hard Work Makes Anything Possible

Ranjita Chaudhary, a 25-year-old from Sudurpaschim Province, grew up in a marginalized community and lost her father at the age of four, yet she boldly pursued her passion for electricity in a field where few women ventured. Supported by the ENSSURE Project, she completed Level 1 and Level 2 electrician training, excelling in both classroom and on-the-job learning.

Her journey took her from earning modest wages to teaching others, training 25 youths at Raghu Ganga Hydropower Plant, and steadily advancing her skills through national exams. In 2024, she achieved a milestone by joining the Nepal Electricity Authority as a Level 3 electrician with stable income and benefits. Determined and resilient, Ranjita now dreams of becoming a supervisor, proving that with hard work and courage, barriers can be broken and aspirations realized.



Reflections from Within: An invitation for staff to pause, observe, and share reflections from their work.



Roma's Courage Stayed With Me Long After the Event



The first time I met Roma Kumari Kumhal was in her small courtyard in Parsa -2, Madhesh. She sat in utter silence with her shawl pulled close, choosing her words carefully, her gaze dropping every time mine tried to meet hers. She reminded me of so many women I've met across the region carrying immense strength but conditioned to stay in the background, to keep life limited to the courtyard, the kitchen, the children.

But then I saw her again. This time at Incubation Center where InElam project was running a bootcamp and later at the idea-pitching event. And I still struggle to explain what that felt like.

The same woman who once hid behind her shawl was standing on a stage along side her husband under bright lights, microphone in hand, speaking with a confidence that made the moment bigger than a pitch. The same woman who once struggled to look up was now presenting mud-based enterprise in front of a hall full of people explaining the idea, answering questions, and even asking for investment alongside her husband.



For this issue, Shraddha Upadhyaya shares a personal reflection.

We often talk about empowerment as if it arrives all at once, but Roma showed me it happens in small steps; the first handshake, the first training session, the first moment she looks up instead of down. When she held the microphone and looked straight at the audience, I felt a lump in my throat. Along with her pitch, I was moved to witness the courage it took for her to get there. The same courage that I saw in Roma's eyes on that day will stay with me for a long, long time.

The bootcamp was part of the InElam Project, where 25 growth-ready entrepreneurs strengthened their business models and investment pitches, culminating in a final-day presentation to potential investors in Birgunj.

Roma was one of the 25 growth-ready entrepreneurs who was trained in the bootcamp where she refined her business model and presented her enterprise on the final day on 22nd November 2025. You can read more about bootcamp on our [website](#).

Voice, Inclusion and Cohesion

1

Strengthening Capacities for Labour, Employment and Safer Migration



Helvetas Nepal has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Local Development Training Academy (LDTA) and the Foreign Employment Board (FEB) to strengthen the capacities of individuals and institutions working on labour, employment, and safer migration across all levels of government. Through this tripartite partnership, the three institutions will collaborate to develop relevant curricula, training modules, and resource materials, while enhancing the capacities of training institutes, resource persons, subject experts, and provincial and local government officials engaged in migration governance.

The partnership forms part of the Safer Migration (SaMi) Programme and Reintegration of Returnee Migrant Workers (ReMi) Project, bilateral initiatives of the Governments of Switzerland and Nepal. The MoU was signed in the presence of the Honourable Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS) and the Ambassador of Switzerland to Nepal, reflecting strong government ownership and long-standing bilateral cooperation between the two countries.



557 municipalities engaged in safer migration services, and over 806,000+ individuals reached principally through Migrant Resource Centres, while 5,600+ individuals received personal counselling



32,400+ migrant workers/beneficiaries provided with facilitation support to access justice, resulting in the receipt of compensation totaling NRs. 5.99 billion (Sep 2018-Nov 2025)



3,000+ returnee migrant workers supported through case management, and 1,600+ returnees supported in developing viable business plans.



Strategic partnerships (Integrated Emergency Response Centers, Solid Waste Management) between the provincial government and local governments initiated in Koshi Province, alongside cooperation in the enactment of six acts and six digitalization initiatives.

2

Nationwide Coverage Achieved: Final Migrant Resource Center Launched in Bhaktapur

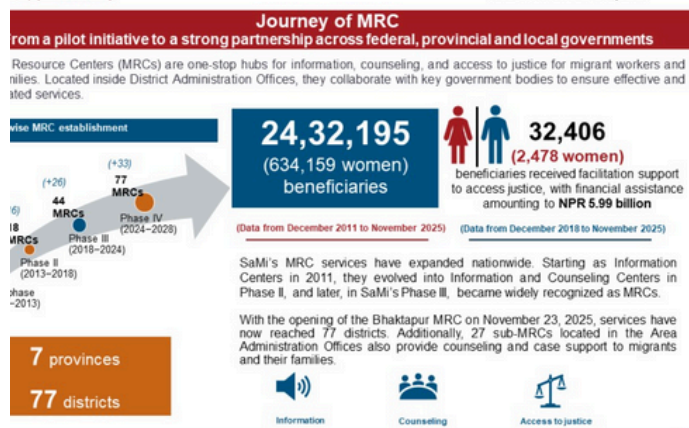


Government of Nepal
Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC
श्वीस सहायता विकास कोष नेपाल एजेंसी



In November 2025, the Migrant Resource Center (MRC) in Suryabinayak Municipality, Bhaktapur, was officially inaugurated—marking a major milestone for safer migration in Nepal. With this addition, MRCs are now operating in all 77 districts, completing nationwide coverage.

Established under the Safer Migration (SaMi) Programme, a bilateral initiative of the Governments of Nepal and Switzerland, MRCs provide pre-departure information and counselling, support with legal and administrative processes related to foreign employment, and access-to-justice services for migrant workers and their families. The programme is implemented by all levels of government, with technical support from Helvetas Nepal on behalf of SDC.

The journey of MRCs began modestly in 2011, with two pilot Information Centers in Khotang and Sarlahi.



Over the years, these evolved into Information and Counselling Centers across 18 districts, and eventually into full-fledged Migrant Resource Centers. Today, the national network is further strengthened by 27 sub-MRCs located in Area Administration Offices.

Strategically housed within District Administration Offices—where passports are issued—MRCs ensure timely access to information and support at a critical point in the migration process. To date, more than 2.43 million people, including over 634,000 women, have benefitted from MRC services. What began as a small pilot has now grown into Nepal's backbone for safer, more informed migration.

3

Advancing Urban Futures: Collaboration, Governance, and Global Learning

In the first week of November 2025, Helvetas Nepal strengthened its urban engagement through two connected initiatives that brought together policy, practice, and global learning. Through the Hamro Shahar Project, Helvetas Nepal and its knowledge partner, Kathmandu University, collaborated with the Nepal PhD Association to contribute to the National Conference on Smart Urban Planning and Development, facilitating a session on public participation and urban governance.



During the same week, Helvetas Nepal hosted Urban Share Week, bringing together colleagues from Helvetas offices in Switzerland, Bolivia and Nepal to exchange experiences and shape Helvetas' thinking on urban transformation. Across both spaces, discussions highlighted that building resilient and inclusive cities requires integrated, multi-stakeholder approaches and urban planning processes that centre marginalised communities, particularly in the context of rising inequality and climate stress.



When Governments Work Together, Cities Get Cleaner



The signing of the Solid Waste Management MoU marked a significant step toward structured intergovernmental coordination, bringing Koshi Provincial Government and multiple local governments into a single, formal partnership to jointly address solid waste challenges. **For the first time, provincial and local governments agreed to plan, finance, and implement waste management interventions collectively, rather than working in isolation.**

The agreement unites six municipalities and rural municipalities—Suryodaya and Rong; Rangeli and Sunawarshi; and Dhanpalthan and Kanepokhari—into two coordinated clusters, with facilitation support from the Swiss-funded Provincial Support Programme (PSP).

Speaking at the event, Minister of Physical Infrastructure Development for Koshi Province Mr. Bhupendra Rai emphasized that shared challenges such as waste management, urban cleanliness, and resource constraints demand coordinated action across levels of government.

The MoU clearly defines roles and responsibilities: provincial authorities will support policy alignment and coordination, while local governments commit to joint planning, budget allocation, preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs), and synchronized implementation. This shared framework is designed to reduce duplication, pool resources, and enable municipalities to address waste management at scale.

This partnership aims to improve waste management systems, reduce duplication of efforts, and strengthen cooperative federalism in practice.



Making Women's Voices Heard in Urban Planning and Development

Yam Kumari Khatri, a 35-year-old resident of Simta Rural Municipality, once held an unclear role as treasurer of a dormant community committee but transformed into an active leader through the Hamro Sahar Project. After receiving training on planning, budgeting, and citizen participation, she mobilized over 50 residents — half of them women — for Ward No. 6's first community-level planning meeting, where 12 demands for inclusive development were raised.

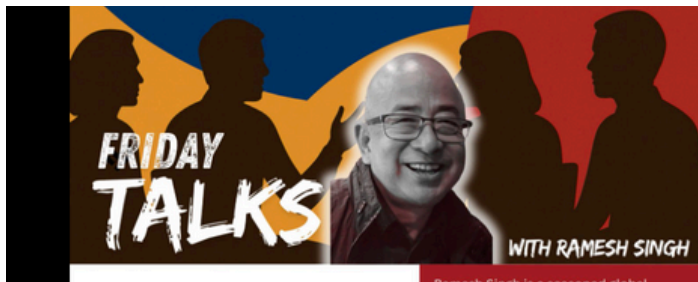
With the ward office committing to address nearly half of these issues, Yam Kumari now actively follows up to ensure progress. Her journey from uncertainty to empowerment highlights how capacity-building and community engagement can enable citizens, especially women, to shape local governance and drive more inclusive and prosperous urban growth.



Things We Didn't Want to Miss

1

Friday Talks Initiative



Helvetas Nepal has launched Friday Talks, a discussion platform designed to create space for reflection, dialogue, and shared learning. The platform brings together Helvetas colleagues and external speakers from diverse fields to share emerging ideas, sectoral trends, and inspiring perspectives on issues that matter. So far, three engaging sessions have explored how civil society is evolving in a changing development landscape, approaches to managing stress, and gender perspectives on vulnerability and consent.

4

Helvetas Nepal's 16 Days of Activism Journey



In solidarity with the global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, Helvetas Nepal and its projects united to raise awareness, spark dialogue, and strengthen collective action.

- A Friday Talk session on the topic "Women, Vulnerabilities, and Consent: From a Gender Perspective" was organized at the Country Office, with Dr. Sony K.C. as the speaker.
- The SDC-funded Safer Migration (SaMi) Programme, in collaboration with Shanti Foundation and Terre des Hommes (TdH), conducted two orientation sessions on safer migration, targeting members of the queer community and girls and women working in the entertainment and hospitality sectors.
- The Integrated Water Resources Management Programme (IWRMP) organized focused learning sessions including awareness-raising and team building activities deepening understanding of gender-based violence and digital safety in Karnali Province.
- SheLeads and InElam Projects came together in solidarity, raising their voices against gender-based violence.

2

Political Economy and Power Analysis (PEPA) Workshop



Following a series of four online sessions and country-based piloting of the PEPA tool, a two-day learning and sharing workshop was organized in the first week of November, 2025. The workshop brought together eight Helvetas colleagues from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Laos, and Nepal. The workshop strengthened cross-country collaboration, consolidated lessons, and identified key capacity needs to advance participatory, evidence-based approaches such as PEPA in development programming.

3

Strengthening Advocacy in Practice



Helvetas Nepal hosted a three-day advocacy workshop bringing together colleagues from across the organisation alongside Alliance 2015 partners from People in Need (PIN) and Welthungerhilfe (WHH). Facilitated by Bernd Steimann from Helvetas Switzerland, the workshop strengthened participants' understanding of advocacy processes, power analysis, and evidence-based influencing. Through cross-project exchange and panel conversations with practitioners and policy actors, participants reflected on how programmes can drive positive change through policy dialogue and advocacy — from local to international levels.



5

Emergency Relief in Drought and Flood-Affected Madhesh



In response to the severe drought affecting Madhesh, Helvetas Nepal in partnership with Bagmati Welfare Society Nepal and in coordination with Hariwon Municipality, conducted a 10-day relief effort in Thami Tole, Ward No. 1 of Hariwon Municipality. The intervention supported 30 of the most affected households — approximately 180 community members — by providing 1,600 liters of safe drinking water per household, storage facilities including 100-liter drums and 20-liter jerry cans, and hygiene awareness on handwashing and safe water practices.

Additionally, a total of 125 flood-affected highly vulnerable households received essential food relief support to help address their immediate needs. Each family was provided with a set of food items sufficient to last for 15 days, helping restore basic food security during this challenging period. As climate-induced disasters intensify, Helvetas Nepal remains committed to safeguarding vulnerable communities and strengthening local resilience in collaboration with civil society and local governments.



7

Strengthening Civil Society Voices in the UPR Process



Helvetas Nepal, together with partners and community groups, convened a Universal Periodic Review (UPR) workshop to support Nepal's Fourth UPR cycle. Building on Helvetas' recently achieved ECOSOC status, the workshop strengthened the capacity of civil society actors to engage meaningfully in international human rights advocacy.

Bringing together participants from Madhesh, Karnali, and Sudur Paschim, the workshop focused on developing grounded stakeholder submissions in two priority areas: women's economic empowerment and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). These submissions drew directly on community experiences and evidence generated through the SheLeads project and the Integrated Water Resources Management Programme (IWRMP), while also reviewing progress on recommendations from the previous UPR cycle.

Through this process, Helvetas, its partners, and community groups jointly contributed stakeholder reports that elevate local perspectives within the global human rights review system. [Read More](#)

6

Launching of the Alliance for Resilient Communities-Nepal (ARC-Nepal)



Helvetas Nepal, Habitat for Humanity Nepal, and SOS Children's Villages Nepal have come together to launch the Alliance for Resilient Communities – Nepal (ARC-Nepal), a new strategic partnership grounded in a shared commitment to inclusive, dignified, and resilient communities. The Alliance brings together the strengths and experience of all three organisations to advance collaborative programming, joint advocacy, and knowledge sharing, with a particular focus on strengthening impact for marginalised communities across Nepal. As a first step, ARC-Nepal will begin by aligning ongoing projects implemented by the three partners in Madhesh Province, creating a foundation for deeper collaboration in the future.



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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