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HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Helvetas supports populations affected by disasters to cope and recover in a more resilient manner. In protracted crises, we support displaced populations to achieve self-reliance through access to livelihoods and employment opportunities. Towards that aim, we leverage our extensive thematic expertise in market-based programming and participatory approaches.

WHO WE ARE

Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation is an international non-profit organization based in Switzerland. It contributes to improving the living conditions of economically and socially disadvantaged populations in more than 35 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Founded in 1955, Helvetas has a strong membership base in Switzerland and affiliate offices in the United States and Germany. In 2023, Helvetas had an annual turnover of CHF 175 million.

HOW WE WORK

Helvetas pursues three main goals: ensuring basic rights, creating perspectives, and strengthening good governance. It does so through more than 280 development and humanitarian aid projects in the fields of economic development, food security, climate change and disaster risk reduction, water, sanitation and hygiene, skills development and education, and voice, inclusion and cohesion.

HELVETAS' HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE & NEXUS ENGAGEMENT

Rationale behind our humanitarian engagement

Driven by conflict and climate induced disasters, global humanitarian needs are expected to rise exponentially in the years to come. Rising humanitarian caseloads increase the pressure on available funding, as well as the demand for holistic approaches that focus on disaster risk reduction, resilience building, and cost-effective responses that are increasingly led by local actors. As a dual-mandated organization with extensive thematic competences, a strong partnership approach, and a long-term presence in the contexts it intervenes, Helvetas is well positioned to provide value in responses to protracted crises and recurrent disasters.

Our programmatic focus

In protracted crises, Helvetas works towards self-reliance and inclusive access to basic services – such as food, water and education – for displaced populations and vulnerable host communities, thereby contributing to social cohesion and reducing the potential for conflicts.

After sudden-onset disasters, we assist affected persons to meet their most critical needs, along with recovery solutions that support affected communities to recover their livelihoods and critical infrastructure, while improving resilience to future disasters.

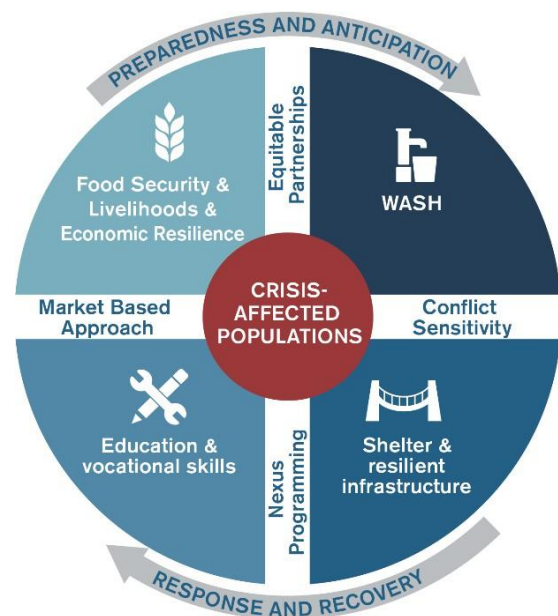
Our core competences are in:

- **Livelihoods and economic resilience**
- **Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)**
- **Shelter and resilient infrastructure**
- **Education in emergencies**

Gender and social equity, conflict sensitivity and protection mainstreaming are transversal approaches that we mainstream across our interventions.

The following approaches are also central to the organization:

- **Principled, people-centered, locally anchored solutions:** We promote a localized humanitarian system, which is mirrored in our operational model that emphasizes equitable partnerships with local organizations.
- **Market-based approach:** Programs are designed with a thorough understanding of markets, and we engage with the private sector to increase effectiveness and avoid negative impacts on market systems.
- **Nexus thinking:** Wherever feasible, we interlink our humanitarian responses with our long-term program by responding to acute needs while building resilience and addressing the root causes of vulnerability.



Food security, livelihoods and economic resilience

After sudden-onset disasters, we meet the immediate survival needs of affected persons to prevent affected populations from resorting to negative coping strategies. Resource transfers are preferably done through cash and voucher assistance to avoid the distortion of markets and leave affected people with more choice and dignity. Early recovery assistance, such as the replacement of agricultural inputs, cash-for-work or the reconstruction of productive infrastructure, allows for a gradual return to normalcy. For the longer-term recovery of livelihoods, we build on our institutional competences in market-based approaches and systems strengthening. This includes support for the recovery of micro entrepreneurs and disrupted value chains.

In protracted displacement contexts, Helvetas supports self-reliance and the economic integration of displaced populations in protracted crises through tailored skills development and support to entrepreneurs that match with market demand. Given our wealth of experience in skills development and other market-based solutions, this is a notable comparative advantage. To strengthen food security, we contribute to improved resilience through the promotion of nutrition-sensitive and climate-resilient agricultural production and consumption practices.

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

After sudden-onset disasters, our focus is on providing immediate access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene for disaster-affected populations. This is achieved through quick system repairs, the establishment of time-limited support in temporary water supply, distributions of WASH NFI, and hygiene promotion. During recovery, we support the rehabilitation of WASH services to promote a gradual return to self-sufficiency. Emphasis is placed on ensuring the ownership and sustainability of services, as well the application of market-based approaches.

In protracted displacement contexts, we support the rehabilitation and improvement of water and sanitation systems for displaced and host communities, including WASH governance and investing in the entire sanitation chain. The objective is to enable access for vulnerable displaced populations to safe drinking water and sanitation, making sure that these groups are prioritized for support and that humanitarian assistance is connected, wherever possible, to longer-term solutions. A comparative advantage in areas where Helvetas has ongoing long-term programs are its well-established relations with local authorities and service providers, which allow for more sustainable and adapted interventions.

Housing and infrastructure

Helvetas understands humanitarian shelter assistance as a continuous process (rather than a product) that evolves according to the needs of the affected populations and considers their living environment in a holistic manner, including protection needs, cultural aspects and livelihood needs. **After sudden-onset disasters**, assistance may consist of providing material and technical support to build temporary shelter solutions, followed by more sustainable reconstruction efforts. Our competence in skills development enables us to create high quality programs focusing on building skills for safe reconstruction.

In protracted displacement contexts, response options range from support to collective sites for displaced populations to cash for hosting or returnee assistance. In its analysis of response options, Helvetas consistently considers the use of market-based approaches, such as cash and voucher assistance, ensures protection mainstreaming and formulates its responses on the building back better and safer principle.

Education in emergencies

In protracted displacement contexts, interventions focus on ensuring the entry and retention of displaced children into the national educational system (through various formal and non-formal education pathways), the reduction of barriers to education, and increasing the quality of education. This sector is only considered in countries with protracted crises where Helvetas has preexisting experience in the education sector upon which interventions can build.

Operational Model

Partnership

Wherever possible, our humanitarian response is implemented in collaboration with national/local partner organisations. Helvetas has a long history of working with and strengthening partner organizations. Globally, our country teams collaborate with over 850 national/local partners; our partnerships abide by the *Principles of Partnership* and we invest in strengthening the capacities of local actors.

As a member of **Alliance 2015**, a strategic network of eight European humanitarian organisations (Welthungerhilfe, Concern Worldwide, People in Need, Ayuda en Acción, Cesci, and ACTED), we are able to engage in joint responses with other members, where complementarity results in added value.

Operational structure

Helvetas' humanitarian responses are managed and monitored through its 35+ country teams. Our decentralized structure helps to conceive projects based on local realities. Country teams are supported by Helvetas' global humanitarian team for quality control, technical support, and surge support after large-scale disasters. The team is also responsible for the management of interventions in countries where Helvetas does not have an operational presence.

Funding sources

For our humanitarian response, Helvetas partners with Swiss and international agencies and donors, including SWS, SDC, UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, UNOPS, BHA, as well as private donors.






Flooding impacting on water supply infrastructure in a village in Bangladesh

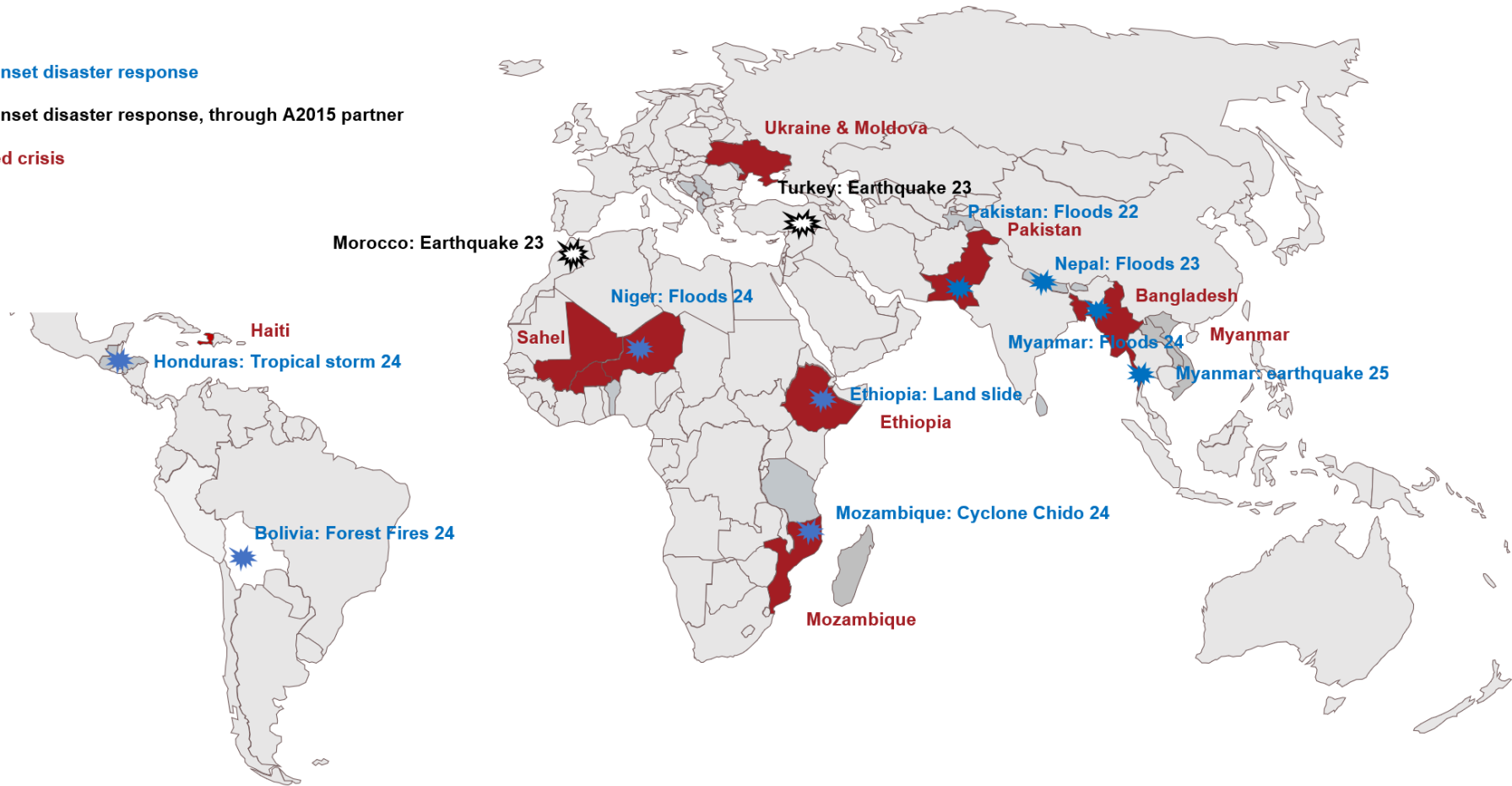
Impact

In 2024, Helvetas reached more than 1mio persons in 15 countries with humanitarian assistance

- **394,274** persons benefitted from multi-sectorial emergency assistance
- **73,590** persons were able to recover their livelihoods through restored productive assets
- **217,562** people affected by crisis accessed water through a new source
- **116,923** persons got access to sanitary facilities
- **21,010** pupils in conflict got access to basic education.
- **15,064** persons benefitted from safe and dignified midterm shelter solutions

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES 204/2025

-  Sudden onset disaster response
-  Sudden onset disaster response, through A2015 partner
-  Protracted crisis



SELECTED PROJECTS: EMERGENCY & RECOVERY

Repair Facilitation Ukraine (REFAUK)

Funding	Swiss Solidarity, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Key Partners	DESPRO NGO, Skat Consulting Ltd
Duration	June 2022 – December 2024
Volume	CHF 7 mio

The Repair Facilitation Ukraine (REFAUK) project was launched in June 2022, with the aim of responding to the needs of war affected and displaced populations in western (Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil), central (Kyiv) and eastern Ukraine (Kharkiv).



A house damaged by the war in Ukraine being repaired.

Key Components

- **Rehabilitation of collective shelters:** The project refurbished collective shelters identified by local government to make them available for longer-term accommodation of IDPs.
- **Housing repair:** The project supports individuals and families whose houses have been damaged by war with materials, tools and the skilled labor required for repairs and renovations.
- **Water and sanitation system rehabilitation:** Repair and rehabilitation of damaged water supply systems, sanitation facilities, and waste water treatment plants to ensure access to clean water and proper sanitation for local communities in war-affected areas.
- **Winterization support:** Insulation and heating assistance to vulnerable houses affected by the war.
- **Community engagement and capacity building:** Local communities receive small

grants, technical support and equipment to take a lead role in the recovery process. They are empowered to identify needs, prioritize repair efforts, and carry out repair works on their own. Toward that aim, the project also established **Repair Hubs** in strategic locations in Kyiv and Kharkiv Oblasts. The hubs serve as centralized points for providing guidance, lending construction tools, and coordinating repair activities.

Results

- In 2023, 102,300 people benefitted from the project. Of those, 60,000 people received access to water, 800 IDPs received assistance with rehabilitated and equipped shelters, 1,500 people received cash for repair assistance to repair damaged houses, 17,000 people suffering power/gas shortages have access to collective heating points, and 23,000 people benefitted from repair grants implemented by local organizations.
- Ninety percent of people benefitting from house repair grants report being satisfied with their experience. 93% of surveyed shelter residents believe that the living conditions meet their needs. 80% of interviewed persons benefitting from heat points are satisfied with the assistance.

Pakistan – Flood Response 2022-24

Funding	Swiss Solidarity, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Key Partners	VEER, RDF
Duration	2022 - 2024
Volume	CHF 2.75 mio

The 2022 monsoon floods caused widespread devastation across Pakistan, affecting more than 33 million people in 110 out of 160 districts. More than 2 million houses were damaged, leading to around 7.9 million people being displaced. The disaster caused widespread damage to irrigation infrastructure and agricultural lands, resulting in disrupted livelihoods for millions of already highly vulnerable households.



Food parcels distributed following the 2022 floods in Pakistan

Emergency Phase Key Components

Helvetas, in collaboration with its partners, responded through a multi-sectorial response in KP, Balochistan, Gilgit Baltistan and Sindh, assisting a total of 252,173 persons with emergency and early recovery assistance. This included distribution of Non-Food Items (NFIs), winterization kits, and installation of water filtration plants, as well as the provision of certified wheat seed for early recovery of livelihoods.

Recovery Phase Key Components

In early 2023, a comprehensive post-flood recovery program was launched in Sindh and KP provinces, supporting most vulnerable households in restoring their living conditions. Activities included:

- Reconstruction of disaster resilient low cost permanent houses
- Rehabilitation of small water systems
- Rehabilitation of irrigation systems

Results

- In 2023, Helvetas supported 56,789 persons through the reconstruction of houses and small water supply systems, as well as the recovery of rural livelihoods through the replacement of agricultural assets and inputs, and the repair of productive infrastructure.

Provision of Lifesaving and Recovery Support to Conflict Affected Communities in Tigray, Ethiopia

Funding	Swiss Solidarity
Key Partners	Development for Peace Organization (DPO)
Duration	January – October 2023
Volume	CHF 1 mio

The conflict between the Ethiopian Federal Government and the Regional Government of Tigray led to large-scale displacement in Tigray and the neighboring Amhara region, causing severe levels of food insecurity due to loss of assets, restriction of mobility, and disruption of markets. Immediately after the conflict, the project addressed the survival needs of food insecure-households in Tigray region (Samre and Tselemti districts) and North Gonder (Adi Arkay district) by providing lifesaving and early recovery support aimed at recovering agricultural livelihoods.



Farmers in Tigray receiving crop seeds to start the farming season.

Key Components

- **Multipurpose cash assistance:** Vulnerable households received three-month multi-purpose cash assistance to cover urgent needs.
- **Agricultural assets replacement:** Vulnerable households were enabled to recover their livelihoods through access to agricultural inputs (e.g., crop seeds and tools).
- **Capacity building:** Farmers and local government staff were trained in Climate Smart Agriculture practices, including integrated soil fertility management, integrated pest management, moisture conservation and conservation agriculture.

Results

- 1,224 food insecure-households were enabled to cover urgent needs through three rounds of multipurpose cash assistance. A survey revealed that the cash assistance was effective: The percentage of households in the area who had acceptable/borderline food consumption scores increased from 41% to 78%.
- 11,619 food-insecure farming households were enabled to start the new farming season and harvest three months later teff, sorghum wheat, maize and vegetables.
- 44% of the assisted population reported they were highly satisfied with the distribution process, while 56% reported being satisfied. 53% of the assisted population considered the assistance as very timely and 40% as timely.

SELECTED PROJECTS:

RESILIENCE PROGRAMMING IN PROTRACTED CRISES (NEXUS)

The Southeast Education and Employment Opportunities Project in Myanmar (SEE)

Funding	UNOPS Geneva
Key Partners	Zabai, Shwe Kyun Thar
Duration	June 2022 – June 2024
Volume	CHF 560,000

The aim of the project implemented in Mon and Kayin States is for IDPs to become productive members of their host communities and participate in furthering common resilience, socio-economic growth and development. The project offers a chain of support for children, youth and the unemployed from 35 IDP camps and host communities, helping participants progress from basic education to skills training and on to employment. Progress through these stages is enabled by protection services and peace building, which also benefit the wider community.



Training sessions are tailored to the local context of displaced populations.

Key Components

- **Income generation:** 2,000 Displacement affected persons receive vocational skills training and job matching services. 1,500 youth supported to establish new business through entrepreneurship training and seed grants.
- **Basic education for children from 5-15 years:** Establishment/support of alternative teaching spaces. Establishment of an innovative e-learning system with servers powered by solar energy to account for intermittent internet/electricity access.
- **Protection & Peacebuilding services:** Strengthening of community-based child protection mechanisms. Support conflict negotiation mechanisms at the community level.

Results

- 389 youths and adults trained through on-the-job programs provided by MSMEs and training service providers.
- 303 displacement-affected people gained access to sustainable sources of income after completing skills trainings.
- The project has successfully introduced a digital blended-learning approach for the community, supporting 34 schools and developing 11 digitized courses (education, skills, protection, psycho social services), thereby increasing accessibility to basic education services for 2,532 children from primary and upper primary levels.
- Significantly increased awareness of child protection among 20,461 individuals from targeted villages, as well as case management and referral support to 237 cases.

Humanitarian response to address the immediate life needs of vulnerable Afghan communities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Funding	ECHO
Key Partners	Consortium with Humanity and Inclusion, Médecins Du Monde
Duration	June 2022 – June 2024
Volume	CHF 1 mio

Pakistan has been for long amongst the largest refugee-hosting countries globally. Afghan refugees born in Pakistan live in legal limbo and at risk of being deported to Afghanistan. Only 20% of Afghan refugee children attend schools. Lack of documentation, language barriers and poverty are just some of the reasons that keep refugee children out of school. While registered refugees go to formal schools, unregistered/undocumented refugees need to go through systems of education established by the government within the refugee villages. Hence, options for refugee children to attend schools are very limited.

The project works in 13 refugee villages (RV) located in 6 districts of KP. Its goal is to mitigate the vulnerabilities among Afghan refugees in these districts by enhancing access to health and education services. Helvetas leads the Education in Emergencies (EiE) component, while health and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) components are implemented by other consortium partners.

The EiE strategy is to enroll out-of-school children in non-formal schools where learning losses are made up through bridging and catch-up programs, and to then mainstream them into formal education.

Key components

- **Establish non-formal education centers:** This includes running costs and equipping them with learning materials.
- **Training of teachers:** on teaching methods as well as MHPSS, protection and inclusion
- **Admission and monitoring retention of children of non-formal education centers in formal schools**



Husna, 8-year-old, studies in Grade 1 in a non-formal center in Peshawar established by Helvetas

Results

- 1,400 children (728 girls, 672 boys) enrolled in catch-up classes across 22 formal education schools.
- Phase-II expanded the initiative to 2,384 children across 40 centers in 13 regions.
- 82% of Phase-I students successfully moved to the next grade in formal schools; 80% of those completing courses await support for a similar transition.
- Among the 373 students who prepared for entry tests to formal schools, 80% successfully gained admission.

Achieving Resilience through Employment and Social Cohesion in Moldova

Funding	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Key Partners	HEKS/EPER, Norwegian Refugee Council
Duration	July 2023 – June 2025
Volume	CHF 3'75 mio

The primary objective of the project is to facilitate the socio-economic integration of refugees and vulnerable individuals from Moldova, fostering their independence from humanitarian assistance. By emphasizing resilience and self-reliance, the project aims to provide a lasting and constructive solution that leads to favorable outcomes for the vulnerable population.



Training on car mechanics provided with the support of the project

Key components

- **Grants and soft-skills vouchers:** Provision of financial assistance to refugees and vulnerable Moldovans in the form of business trainings and start-up grants to support self-employment, grants to procure or replace productive assets, and vouchers for attending short-term Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) courses, language courses, and transportation grants to facilitate access to childcare services.
- **Capacity enhancement for the National Employment Agency (NEA):** Building the capacity of the NEA to provide services customized to the specific needs of vulnerable individuals.

A comprehensive training program will teach how to identify the underlying factors contributing to vulnerability and the barriers that hinder households from attaining sustainable livelihoods. This initiative encompasses the establishment of local employment coordination platforms and the development of a digital referral system. Both platforms and system are designated to refer vulnerable individuals, including refugees, to external actors capable of providing the necessary assistance to pursue sustainable livelihoods, encompassing both waged and self-employment.

- **Awareness campaigns:** A two-pronged media campaign approach is adopted, bolstering the NEA's efforts to promote its employment services to vulnerable individuals and to enhance the motivation of beneficiaries in pursuing income-generating activities.
- **Expansion of childcare facilities:** Provision of in-kind/repairs support aiming at strengthening the service delivery capacity of the state childcare providers.
- **Social cohesion:** Facilitation of social inclusion, business connections and interactions through socio-economic events, and dialogue for Ukrainian refugees and Moldovans. Additionally, provision of micro grants to community groups to implement community-led and community-defined micro-projects to strengthen self-reliance, ownership, resilience and prevent tensions between refugees and host communities.

Results

- Capacity building for 200 staff of the NEA and Social Assistance staff. The media campaign reached up to 100,000 people.
- 19 state childcare facilities have received in-kind supplies, offering the caregivers the possibility to attend courses or receive employment.
- 400 persons trained through short-term TVET and language trainings. Entrepreneurship business trainings provided to 69 beneficiaries and 130 people assisted with transportation grants.
- 20 Survivor Community-Led Response grants provided to community groups to implement community-led initiatives, while 72 social cohesion events have been completed.

MORE INFORMATION

- [Helvetas Website](#)
- [Helvetas Website – Humanitarian Response Section](#)

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