

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

CAPABILITY STATEMENT



Homestay ready to welcome guests for lunch in Kyrgyzstan. © Patrick Rohr

A bridge to inclusive development and sustainable ecosystems

Tourism is more than an economic powerhouse — it is a sector deeply intertwined with natural ecosystems and local livelihoods. In a world facing the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, it holds the potential to be a transformative force. When designed holistically, it can serve as a dynamic catalyst, fostering inclusive development, creating jobs, and enhancing the well-being of marginalized communities, all while promoting the conservation of natural and cultural assets.

Helvetas recognizes that tourism cannot operate in isolation. Its effectiveness lies in its interconnection with other sectors. By leveraging these interdependencies, a paradigm shift can be made from traditional models of growth to one that prioritizes quality, sustainability, and equity. Our approach emphasizes inclusive systems, regional value creation, and governance structures that empower local stakeholders to maximize benefits for residents and ecosystems alike.

This document highlights Helvetas' vision for sustainable tourism as a vehicle for systemic change. It details innovative methodologies, showcases examples of transformative projects, and underlines the necessity of embedding tourism into broader development ecosystems. Tourism is not just about destinations — it's about people, resilience, and sustainable living spaces.

ABOUT HELVETAS

Helvetas is committed to a just world in which all people determine the course of their lives in dignity and security, using environmental resources in a sustainable manner. Sustainable tourism is an important sector providing opportunities to meeting these commitments. We are an independent development organization based in Switzerland with affiliated organizations in Germany and the United States. We currently focus our work on 30+ partner countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, building on our experience of over six decades of supporting development and humanitarian priorities of stakeholders and partners in the countries we work.

HOW WE WORK

Helvetas adopts an equitable partnership approach to development, seeking to understand the local context and to work in collaboration with multiple stakeholders to find sustainable solutions. We co-implement projects, provide thematic and methodological advice, and facilitate policy dialogue at local, regional and international levels. Our experience shows that sustainable tourism development without women's economic empowerment risks inclusive and equitable outcomes, and requires long-term commitment and engagement with communities, governments and the private sector.

We support women and men in taking charge of improving their livelihoods in a sustainable manner and in working together as partners. The impact of our work is the product of a three-pronged approach: project work, thematic and methodological advice as well as policy dialogue at local, regional and international levels. We are convinced that development can only be effective if the conditions of long-term engagement are met. We have gained a wealth of experience from more than six decades of working in the Global South.

BEYOND SECTORAL DEVELOPMENT: CONNECTING RELATED ECOSYSTEMS

Why tourism as a catalyst for inclusive growth and sustainable development?

Tourism is a cornerstone of global economic and social development, ranking among the top five exports in over 150 countries and serving as the **primary export in 60 nations, including more than half of the least developed countries**. With an average annual growth rate of 4.5% since the 1980s, it contributes significantly to 10% of global GDP. **As such, governments increasingly recognize its potential** to enhance trade balances, generate employment, stabilize economies, and contribute to national pride. Beyond its economic impact, tourism is a uniquely **inclusive job creator with 1 in 10 jobs worldwide**. In rural areas, it directly connects consumers and producers, acting as **a vital market for local products** and services, creating regional value and fostering equitable development.

Tourism's growth **trajectory remains strong due to several factors**. In developing countries, as more people meet their basic needs, rising incomes, the emergence of a strong middle class, and improved worker rights, such as paid holidays, are bolstering domestic travels. The sector is already a driving force in global development, **requiring no additional support for mere expansion**. Instead, efforts should focus on **catalyzing its progression to ensure it remains inclusive, sustainable, and maximizes its positive impacts on communities and ecosystems**.



Dinner in a homestay in Nam Hong, Northern Vietnam © Jonathan Widmer

Rationale for Helvetas' approach to sustainable tourism

To maximize its potential, Helvetas advocates for an [integrated approach that goes beyond isolated, sectoral interventions](#). Sustainable tourism projects should address not only economic concerns but also social and environmental dimensions, acting as a catalyst for broader system change. This approach strengthens **the sector's role as an instrument for sustainable development**.

Key to this vision is **understanding tourism's interdependencies with other systems**, such as agriculture, transport, crafts, and the environment. By fostering interconnected value chains, tourism can stimulate inclusive economic growth, enhance job creation, and promote the valorization of cultural and natural assets. This holistic framework ensures that its development is not only sustainable but also equitable, benefiting disadvantaged groups and rural communities. This involves **promoting good governance, creating incentives for conservation, and strengthening local capacities for self-sustaining management of resources**.

This systems-based approach encourages investments in sustainable tourism by governments, private actors, and communities. It also leverages tourism's ability to influence related sectors, **fostering collaborative and efficient management of shared resources to enhance living spaces for residents** amplifying benefits for communities, ecosystems, and economies.

Our approach & innovation

Inclusive entry door to the world of work

Tourism is a powerful job creator at the base of the pyramid, offering opportunities for entry-level employees with limited education, no prior experience, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, including migrants. This labor-intensive sector employs a high percentage of youth and women, making it an inclusive engine for socioeconomic development, like in the [MarketMakers project](#) in Bosnia-Herzegovina (SDC funded). Sustainable tourism allows individuals to gain their first professional experience and develop skills that can lead to career advancement or entrepreneurship. By bringing hard currency directly to remote areas, tourism stimulates local economies and supports self-employment. However, to fully capitalize on tourism's potential as an engine of employment, addressing skills gaps and professional training is critical.



Our recommendations



[Web platform to stimulate rural tourism in Bosnia-Herzegovina](#). © Balkantina

Inclusive Systems Approach



The Trans Dinarica Cycling Route through the Western Balkans. © Matevž Hribar

Capacity building is particularly crucial in emerging destinations and rural areas, where the lack of competencies and infrastructure often undermines the inclusivity and effectiveness of tourism. In fact, what sets tourism apart is its reliance on dynamic, interconnected systems instead of traditional linear value chains which follow a sequential process to produce goods. Tourism rather operates as a network which directly intersects with the product, and is shaped by the interaction of services, activities, and experiences, requiring coordinated efforts to deliver value effectively. In projects like [RECONOMY](#) (SIDA funded), Helvetas recognizes the need to strengthen these connecting dots by addressing gaps in governance, capacity building, and financial sustainability. This approach en-

ables rural and underserved communities to participate effectively in tourism value chains, fostering inclusivity and maximizing local benefits.

Beyond numbers: Transforming sustainable tourism through quality added value

Nevertheless, even if defined as “sustainable”, tourism projects still rely on traditional models prioritizing marketing and increasing tourist arrivals. This reasoning overlooks the negative side effects related to climate change and overconsumption. As such, sustainable tourism projects too must pivot to emphasizing high-value, low-volume experiences, not only minimizing harmful impact but actively contributing to environmental preservation and community well-being like in the [GREENTOUR project](#) (EU funded). This involves shifting from quantitative metrics to qualitative indicators that assess residents' quality of life and the health of local ecosystems. By attracting smaller groups of conscientious travelers, destinations can reduce their environmental footprint while enhancing economic benefits for local communities. This strategy fosters authentic, meaningful experiences for visitors and promotes the conservation of cultural and natural heritage.



Tourists enjoy making traditional Kyrgyz cheese snack. © Meder Myrzaev

Sustainable tourism as a vehicle to achieve greater impact



Protected Areas (PAs) of Osogovo and Maleshevo, North Macedonia. © Aleksandar Aleksovski

While often associated with employment generation and economic development, sustainable tourism has a far broader role to play. In Helvetas projects, biodiversity conservation, natural resources, water management, cultural heritage, and local governance often form the starting points, with tourism emerging organically [as a key sector](#) to advance sustainable development such as in the [Nature Conservation Program](#) (SDC funded). This portfolio vision recognizes the need to see tourism's ability to create inclusive opportunities for local residents while preserving the environment and cultural identity. Furthermore, tourism is uniquely positioned to lead the green economy transformation of MSMEs such as in the [Swiss Sustainable Winter Tourism Project](#) (SECO funded). Its direct connection with consumer demand requires it to adapt more quickly to emerging trends. This sensitivity not only allows tourism to align with evolving consumer expectations but also fosters sustainable practices across related sectors by creating closer links between responsible travelers and producers throughout the value chain. Emerging as a response to the complexities of local contexts rather than being pre-planned, sustainable tourism becomes a catalyst for change, generating mutual benefits and achieving greater impact.

Regional value creation: Connecting tourism to local economic cycles

In fact, sustainable tourism has immense potential to generate a circular economy by connecting with other sectors such as agriculture, crafts, and transport. By building and strengthening locally closed value chains—from production through transformation to consumption—the added value generated by tourism can create a multiplier effect, keeping tourism income within a region to ensure it feeds directly into sustainable and repetitive economic cycle. For example, the [Swiss Tourism for Sustainable Development - ST4SD](#) in Vietnam (SECO funded) fosters connections to enable organic products from the Cam Ha vegetable village to supply hotels and restaurants and supports the creation of authentic agro-



Tra Que Village has 202 households growing organic vegetables. © Sài Gòn Giải Phóng

tourism experiences for tourists, diversifying local activities and enhancing community engagement. The project identifies high-potential initiatives to serve as models to inspire other entrepreneurs and create a dynamic of innovation with the goal that local actors independently create products that meet the dual objectives of attracting visitors and generating income.

Tourism governance: Fostering resilience through participative and collaborative efforts



Workshop on Inclusive Systems Approach for community led tourism in Haa Valley. © Helvetas Bhutan

In emerging tourism destinations and rural areas of developing countries, the absence of a central organizing body often results in fragmented efforts and inefficiencies. Effective tourism governance requires structuring stakeholders under a unified framework to facilitate dialogue, leverage collective strengths, and implement policy reforms that improve conditions for sustainable tourism growth. At the same time, tourism can be a pathway and unifying goal for bringing public and private stakeholders around the table such as in the [Decentralization and Local Governance](#) project in Bhutan for which a systemic Destination Management Organization (DMO) was key to coordinate and harmonize stakeholder efforts.

DMOs foster inclusivity, good governance, and shared benefits for all involved, ensuring that tourism growth aligns with sustainability objectives. Facilitating such participatory processes involves strengthening the core functions of DMOs within specific local contexts. Rather than creating entirely new entities, existing actors are empowered to fulfill essential roles without significant additional investments or infrastructure. To ensure relevance, DMO models are tailored to the unique needs of rural or emerging destinations, often adopting flexible, less formal structures that resonate with local governance systems.

Sustainable destination management: Creating living spaces for communities

There is a natural connection for embedding tourism into spatial planning activities and its development must focus on creating vibrant living spaces for local residents. Similar to [the landscape approach](#), this concept views a destination as a multidimensional territory where tourism harmonizes with local livelihoods, natural resources, and cultural heritage. Sustainable destination management emphasizes optimizing resources and prioritizing the well-being of the population while ensuring environmental and economic resilience. This encompasses key dimensions, including education, access to basic services, food security, biodiversity conservation, cultural heritage preservation, integration of tourism with other essential activities, and local governance. This territorial approach unites diverse stakeholders under a shared vision, fostering collaboration to develop the area in an equitable and sustainable manner such as in the [Bai Alai project](#) (SDC funded). It ensures that tourism development not only benefits visitors but also enhances the quality of life for indigenous populations and rural communities.



Alai artisans prepare dowry for a granddaughter. © Patrick Rohr

Our lessons learnt and challenges in striving for Sustainable Tourism



Enhanced donor and project coordination: Tourism's cross-cutting nature offers opportunities to improve donor collaboration and align development aid with tourism and non-tourism projects. By mapping tourism ecosystems and analyzing their interconnections, Helvetas identifies synergies that amplify the impact of initiatives. Coordinating efforts minimizes overlaps, leverages good practices, and fosters mutual learning.



Inclusivity requires capacity and equitable participation: Tourism provides an inclusive entry point for disadvantaged groups, offering skills and employment opportunities. However, this inclusivity depends on addressing capacity gaps of local stakeholders and ensuring fair participation. Many communities lack training, governance structures, and financial resources to engage fully in tourism value chains.



Adapting to volatility and seasonality: Tourism is vulnerable to external shocks, such as pandemics, political instability, conflicts and climate change. Seasonality worsens this volatility, creating income and employment challenges. Helvetas emphasizes building resilience by diversifying offerings, strengthening governance structures, and promoting sustainable practices to reduce reliance on high-peak seasons.



Strengthening communication for tourism success: Effective communication, locally and internationally, is essential for sustainable tourism. This includes assisting tourism actors showcase their destinations and align stakeholders on shared goals. Locally, fostering dialogue between communities and enterprises ensures mutual benefits. Internationally, promoting sustainable practices attracts conscientious travelers.

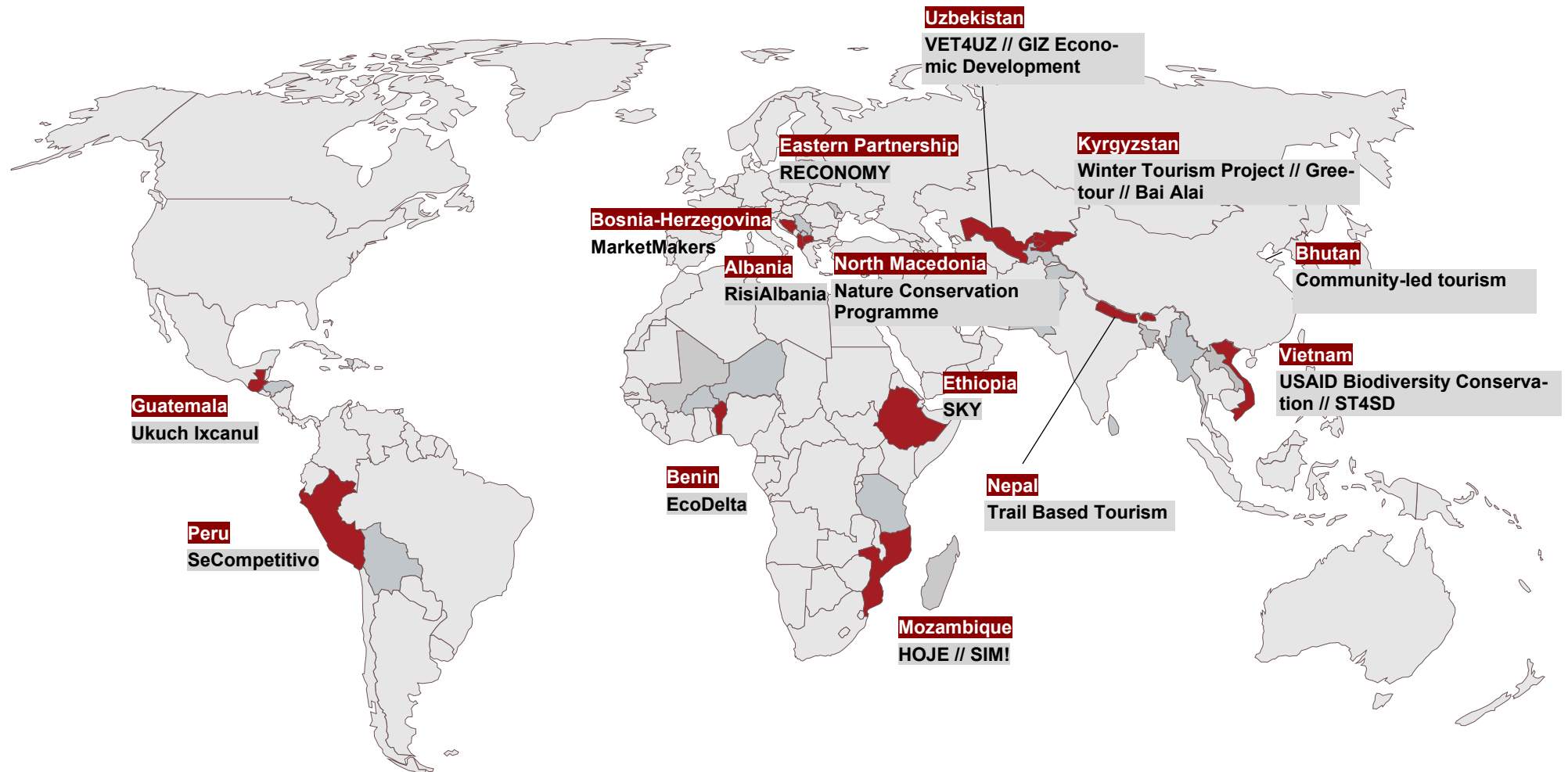


Time and leadership in fostering systemic change: Transformative tourism initiatives require time to build trust, establish partnerships, and achieve results. Success depends on identifying and empowering local champions to drive initiatives forward. Investing in these leaders ensures long-term ownership so they act as catalysts, bridging local knowledge with innovation for lasting impact.



Yurt camp for community-based tourism in Khirgizstan. © S.B.Opladen

WHERE WE WORK IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM



SELECTION OF PROJECTS

WINTER TOURISM - KYRGYZSTAN

Client/Funding Source	SECO
Key Partners	Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), Karakol Destination
Duration	2019 - 2025
Volume	CHF 5,000,000



Winter yurt stay in Boz-Uchuk valley near Karakol. © Stanislav Stepanov

Creating year-round opportunities through a green destination ecosystem

The [Swiss Sustainable Winter Tourism Project](#) aims to create year-round employment and income opportunities by fostering high economic value with low social and environmental impacts. The project focuses on improving the quality of tourism services by certified tourism providers in the Karakol region, leading to increased turnover for businesses and the local economy.

The project leverages [Swiss expertise](#) to guide local stakeholders in developing safe and sustainable tourism products, accessible across all four seasons to the local population, to diversify for inclusive employment. Karakol has become [a model for Global Sustainable Tourism Council \(GSTC\) standards](#), aligning with best practices to address environmental and social sustainability challenges.

Capacity building efforts have empowered the [Karakol Destination Management Organization](#) (DMO) and local enterprises through tailored training programs. The project has also [supported Issyk-Kul](#)

[State University](#) to play a key role in sustainable tourism planning and monitoring through capacity building in research and data collection.

Results

- **Creating a dynamic tourism ecosystem:** The [Accelerator of Prosperity](#) program empowered local entrepreneurs to innovate and enhance tourism products, driving economic growth.
- **Recognized sustainable practices:** Karakol gained international recognition through the People's Choice Award 2024, underscoring its achievements in sustainability.
- **Enhanced tourism governance:** Strengthened the DMO and fostered collaboration among stakeholders, positioning Karakol as a leader in sustainable destination management.

RISI - ALBANIA

Client/Funding Source	SDC
Key Partners	Ministry of Finance and Economy, Partners Albania
Duration	2013 - 2025
Volume	CHF 18,500,000

Inclusive employment opportunities through sustainable tourism

[RisiAlbania](#) is a youth employment initiative aimed at [generating opportunities for youth](#) through private sector growth and improved labor market access. Recognizing tourism as a critical driver of sustainable economic development, the project strategically prioritized authentic experiences and community development while preserving Albania's cultural and natural heritage.

Risi worked to diversify Albania's tourism offerings, promoting longer tourist stays, travel to less-visited regions, and local spending to [spread economic benefits across rural areas](#). Reducing reliance on seasonal mass tourism, it emphasized the importance of skills development by institutionalizing vocational training models and leveraging Swiss expertise to ensure market-relevant skills in a competitive and growing tourism industry. By integrating sustainable tourism practices with youth employment strategies, the project not only contributed to

reducing unemployment but also encouraged conservation and the equitable distribution of economic benefits, successfully showcasing how the sector can be a powerful tool for both local development and job creation.



Training youth on wood carving at a workshop in the Medioval Bazaar. © Visit Gjirokastra Association

Results

- **Job creation and placement:** Employment of over 12'000 young women and men, from which more than 50% are young women and more than 20% are from disadvantaged youth groups.
- **Leveraged private sector investment:** Contribution of CHF 10,5 million allowing 11'500 young people to enhance their skills and facilitating improved labour market intermediation services for 110'000 persons.
- **Facilitated the development of tourism models:** Extended tourist stays by 40% in select regions, creating new income streams for small businesses.

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Client/Funding Source	USAID
Key Partners	WWF-US, WWF-VN, IUCN, Fauna and Flora International (FFI), ENV, IZW, and GWC
Duration	2020 - 2025
Volume	CHF 2,813,671

Transforming forest-dependent communities

In collaboration with WWF, the [Biodiversity Conservation Activity](#) empowers forest-dependent communities in Vietnam to transition towards conservation-friendly income streams while preserving

biodiversity and cultural identity. By promoting community-based ecotourism, [sustainable agriculture value chains](#), and vocational training, the project provides alternatives to unsustainable resource use, encouraging communities to value forests as vital assets. These initiatives also address the root causes of illegal logging and hunting, creating legal employment opportunities that reduce environmental degradation.

Communities connected with markets for high-value agriculture and with tourism companies gain a tangible stake in preserving forests, turning them into [long-term economic assets](#). Simultaneously, the project strengthens governance by promoting accountability and inclusive participation in forest management. Targeted law enforcement disrupts illegal supply chains, reducing access to illicit forest products and creating stronger disincentives. Lastly, campaigns raise awareness and change consumer behaviors at both local and international levels, curbing demand for illegal forest products. Combined, these strategies build a resilient foundation for environmental protection while empowering communities with the tools for self-reliance.



Vietnam Livelihood activities in Quang Tri province. © USAID Biodiversity Conservation / WWF-Viet Nam

Results

- **Community livelihoods enhanced:** Over 500 forest-dependent households transitioned into alternative livelihoods with products like mushrooms, passion fruit, and honey.
- **Tourism opportunities expanded:** 773 individuals generated increased income from activities such as trekking and eco-tourism, and 2,190 gained social benefits.
- **Capacity-building and empowerment:** 3,880 individuals, including 1,678 women, participated in decision-making processes.

ECODELTA - BENIN

Client/Funding Source	Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg
Key Partners	ONG EcoBénin
Duration	2024 - 2026
Volume	CHF 936,050

Inclusive ecotourism, livelihoods, and biodiversity conservation

Benin's national tourism policy foresees establishing the country as a flagship destination in West Africa, preserving its cultural and natural heritage. The [EcoDelta project](#) aligns with this vision by fostering socio-professional integration of young people from the Mono Delta reserve. This initiative contributes to the [BEN/003 "École des métiers du tourisme, de l'hôtellerie et de la restauration"](#) program.



Bouche du Roy, Biosphere du Mono. © Eco - Benin

EcoDelta develops a training and insertion model tailored to ecotourism, emphasizing inclusive economic growth. The project promotes fair and equitable sharing of tourism-generated value among local communities, reducing dependence on unsustainable activities and ensuring that benefits reach underserved populations.

By fostering community governance, the project strengthens local capacities to manage and develop responsible tourism while conserving biodiversity. Local communities are engaged in creating sustainable livelihoods by participating in tourism governance and development. Awareness efforts highlight the intrinsic value of local resources, ensuring communities recognize and benefit from tourism.

Results

- **Skill development for 225 individuals (35% women):** 60 guides, 15 boatmen, and 150 artisans (basket makers, potters, cocoa processors, local cooks, and eco-constructors).
- **Empowered governance:** Supported communities in developing responsible tourism governance structures, ensuring biodiversity conservation and equitable benefit-sharing.
- **Inclusive value chain participation:** Strengthened the inclusion of vulnerable groups in tourism, building sustainable livelihoods and reducing reliance on unsustainable practices.

VET4UZ - UZBEKISTAN

Client/Funding Source	SDC
Key Partners	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation, Association of Hoteliers, SFU-VET, CEMETS
Duration	2020 - 2025
Volume	CHF 5,500,000

Advancing sustainable hospitality through vocational education reform

Also known as the [Support to VET Reforms Project in Uzbekistan](#), VET4UZ focuses on enhancing employment prospects for young people by reforming the vocational education and training system. The hospitality sector was selected as a pilot for the reform due to its inclusive nature, labour-intensive characteristics, and alignment with international standards, making it ideal for testing dual VET models. Hospitality not only offers opportunities for youth, women, and migrants but also benefits from structured human resource management and a culture of internships, with units present in both rural and urban settings. The project works closely with the [Association of Hoteliers](#) of Uzbekistan, strengthening private sector involvement while aligning with the adoption of Green Skills and GSTC standards for sustainable hotel management.

VET4UZ facilitates Swiss expertise from the world-renowned [EHL Group](#), founded as top-ranked École hôtelière de Lausanne. Additionally, Uzbekistan's stakeholders gain access to Swiss dual VET know-how through partnerships with the [SFUVET](#) and

[CEMETS' Reform Lab](#), bringing cutting-edge expertise in VET reforms, including quality assurance, teacher training, and curriculum development.



Housekeeping training in Bukhara. © Sahid Zarafshon

Results

- **Structured private sector:** Strengthened the Association of Hoteliers to facilitate dialogue with employers and support the VET system.
- **Capacity building:** Transferred Swiss know-how, enhancing the capacity of government bodies to implement effective VET reforms.
- **Improved employability:** Creating opportunities through dual education models tailored to the hospitality sector.

CORAZÓN DEL VOLCÁN – GUATEMALA

Client/Funding Source	Fondo para la Conservación de Bosques Tropicales (FCA) and Helvetas
Key Partners	Fundap, Intecap, Mesaforc VI and the Association of Community Tourist Guides El Valle
Duration	2016 - 2021
Volume	CHF 2,140,000

Nature conservation via community-led opportunities in the Western Altiplano

The [Uk'uch Ixcanul project](#) is an innovative initiative promoting biodiversity conservation and sustainable economic development in the Volcanic Chain of Quetzaltenango. Implemented by a consortium of partners, the project focuses on [inclusive forest governance, sustainable land use, and community-driven economic opportunities](#) to address environmental and socio-economic challenges. Central to the project is [the integration of](#)

[traditional organizational structures with modern governance mechanisms](#). It consolidates biodiversity conservation efforts by promoting sustainable forest use and reducing threats such as illegal logging, fires, and deforestation.

The economic component focuses on creating a regional community tourism route that [links local service and product providers into a cohesive value chain](#), including the development of tourism products such as ecotourism, birdwatching, and homestays. The project also enhances the connectivity and ecosystem services of urban and communal forests, ensuring they remain resilient and functional landscapes.

Payments for ecosystem services are introduced as a financial mechanism to ensure that conservation efforts are economically viable. Through participatory governance structures, the project builds the [capacities of communities to manage their natural resources sustainably](#).

Results

- **Ecological impact:** 14,500 hectares of forest are under conservation, supported by restoration initiatives.
- **Economic growth:** Reinvestment of tourism revenues into conservation areas, benefiting over 3,800 families with 20% increased income.
- **Inclusive governance:** The Bosque Modelo Los Altos (BMLA) is co-managed by community-based structures, incorporating traditional knowledge and practices.



Birdwatching in volcanic chain of Quetzaltenango. © Helvetas Guatemala

TRAIL BASED TOURISM - NEPAL

Client/Funding Source	SDC
Key Partners	29 Local Governments, Provincial Government of Koshi and Nepal's Federal Government
Duration	2024 - 2028
Volume	CHF 16,375,000



Path alignment of Tea Garden Trail and construction of basic amenities for trail users. © Pranil Updhayay

Revitalizing communities through trail based tourism offerings

The [Trail-Based Tourism Development Project \(TTDP\)](#), a collaboration between the Government of Nepal and Switzerland, empowers marginalized communities in Koshi Province by fostering sustainable and inclusive tourism. The initiative combines capacity building, cultural preservation, and economic development to transform trails into vibrant corridors.

The project emphasizes decentralized governance by engaging 29 local governments, provincial authorities, and community members. Through tailored capacity-building programs, it equips local stakeholders with skills in tourism operations, hospitality standards, and cultural heritage management. This approach fosters community ownership, ensuring long-term benefits for both people and the environment.

[Swiss expertise in trail development and maintenance](#) plays a pivotal role in establishing a sustainable trail system. The project's four pillars—rehabilitating 400 km of eco-friendly trails, branding and promoting trail destinations, policy reforms to encourage local cultural investments, and hospitality training—are designed to build resilient tourism ecosystems while empowering communities to manage their tourism potential.

Results

- **Economic empowerment:** 400,000 labor days generated during trail construction, with 30% of earnings benefiting women.
- **Labour market:** 2,000 individuals employed and 1,000 community members (25% women) trained with essential skills in tourism operations.
- **Cultural preservation:** 50% of homestays built in traditional architectural styles, preserving local heritage and identity.

VOICES FROM OUR PROJECTS



"Life as a former monk was a constant struggle to meet our family's basic needs. Performing rituals barely sustained my wife and me. Equipped with valuable skills, I could start a homestay, allowing me to provide my children with a superior education. Today, I proudly serve as the chairperson of Haa Homestay Association."

Kinley Wangchuck, Haa, Bhutan, Community-led Tourism



"Raised by my Uncle, I was left without perspective when he died. I used to live on the street and saw no way out of the misery. Many youth in Ehtiopia have no possibility to learn a job. Thanks to my training as a chef, I will be able to lead an independent life."

Temesgen Yenework, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, SKY Project

MORE INFORMATION

- [Helvetas](#)
- [Sustainable tourism from a system perspective](#)

PARTNERSHIPS, ALLIANCES AND NETWORKS

Our work is grounded in a strong partnership approach, leveraging collaborations with both local and international tourism experts to deliver impactful and sustainable solutions. Helvetas actively engages with a diverse network of renowned institutions and organizations, ensuring the integration of best practices, innovative methodologies, and global expertise into our projects. Our partnerships include:

- **[Swiss Tourism Experts Network](#)**: A unique collaboration with leading Swiss tourism professionals, contributing world-class expertise and innovative approaches to sustainable tourism.
- **[AKTE – Working group for tourism and development](#)**: Partnering to ensure tourism fosters equitable development while respecting cultural and environmental integrity.
- **Swiss tourism Universities of Applied Sciences**: Working together on knowledge exchange, applied research, and advanced methodologies for sustainable tourism development.
- **Swiss hospitality schools (e.g., EHL Group - École hôtelière de Lausanne)**: Collaborating on cutting-edge hospitality training and capacity building for local stakeholders.
- **[Global Sustainable Tourism Council \(GSTC\)](#)**: Integrating internationally recognized sustainability standards and certifications into our projects.
- **International and local tourism organizations**: Partnering with NGOs, private sector actors, and government bodies to align strategies and implement effective tourism governance structures.

Through these partnerships, we ensure that our interventions are innovative, context-sensitive, and aligned with the highest standards of sustainability.



Becoming a tourism guide, a new opportunity for women in the Alai region in Kirghizstan. © Patrick Rohr