WHY IS A RADIO THE KEY TO CLEAN HANDS?
Our vision is a just world in which all men and women determine the course of their lives in dignity and security, using environmental resources in a sustainable manner.

“I had to go far to find soap in the times of Corona and pay a lot for it. Now I know how to make it myself – for my family and also to supply others in our village.”

Dapoa Lankoandé, farmer, Burkina Faso

“The irrigation channel is what made it possible to grow sweetcorn, eggplants, chillies and other vegetables in my garden. I used to only be able to grow crops that needed very little water.”

Lauricia Desilius, grandmother, Haiti

“The IT course opened so many doors for me here in Pakistan. I set up the very first IT company in the district and soon I’m going to make my village the freelance hub for IT-persons of my province.”

Ibrahim Khan, IT-specialist, Pakistan

“A radio is key to clean hands because it is often the only way to inform people in remote villages about coronavirus prevention measures such as hand-washing and social distancing.”

Bio Sarako Tamou, mayor of Banikoara, Benin

Cover photo: Maïmouna Tangara, farmer, Mali

© Helvetas Benin; Cover photo: © Fatoumata Tioye Coulibaly/fairpicture
Helvetas has been contributing to efforts to alleviate poverty, working to advance human rights, and fighting injustice across the globe since it was founded in 1955. Poor and disadvantaged people and communities are at the center of our work. Together, we create new prospects, leveraging existing potential, strengths, and assets: we help people to help themselves. We provide humanitarian response following natural disasters and in conflict situations. We always work closely with local partner organizations from civil society and the private sector, as well as with local authorities.

Donations from private individuals, foundations, Swiss cantons, municipalities and businesses, and a contribution from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), enable us to implement our long-term development program in some 30 countries. In addition, we carry out mandated development projects for SDC and numerous international organizations, enabling us to implement our long-term development program in some 30 countries. Donations from private individuals, foundations, Swiss cantons, municipalities and businesses, and a contribution from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), enable us to implement our long-term development program in some 30 countries. In addition, we carry out mandated development projects for SDC and numerous international organizations.

Helvetas is a non-profit association, with a strong member base in Switzerland and sister organizations in Germany and the United States. We are a member of Alliance2015, a strategic network of eight European non-governmental organizations. Helvetas is denotationally neutral and politically independent.

Innovative solutions in extraordinary times

The coronavirus pandemic shone a spotlight on some harsh realities last year. The number of women, men and children going hungry almost doubled within a few months. Families who had just lifted themselves out of poverty fell back into this heavily stressful situation. At Helvetas, we and our partner organizations do everything in our power to support such people.

The experiences of 2020 have driven us to come up with innovative solutions at an even faster pace because previously successful approaches proved impossible to implement during the pandemic. We made adjustments to well over 100 projects. Where a training center had to close, young women and men in places like Haiti continued studying in WhatsApp groups. Teachers switched to half-classes to maintain practical lessons. In Mozambique, disinfectant information about basic hygiene measures is now being produced from sugar cane. In the States, we have used radio and social media to disseminate factual information about basic hygiene measures.

The needs are overwhelming. Even as vaccines raise hopes of a return to normality in the North, coronavirus retains its grip on the global South. Poverty reduction remains an absolute priority. Thank you for your continuing support for our work.

Melchior Lengsfeld, Executive Director of Helvetas

PAINFUL REALITY – GREAT SOLIDARITY

2020 was not a successful year in the fight against poverty. Meanwhile, the coronavirus crisis poses enormous challenges for the entire world, and millions of people will fall back into poverty.

Huge support in a year of hardship

This annual report looks back over an unbelievable twelve months. For once, I would like to praise all Helvetas staff. From Laos to Niger, and from Moldova to Peru, they have achieved amazing things in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. But my thanks go out to you too and to all the people in Switzerland who have willingly made such generous donations (not just to Helvetas but to other organizations) to alleviate the suffering of so many people around the world. Your solidarity has saved many lives during these desperate times.

Women have suffered particularly during this crisis – from poverty, hunger and often from violence. More girls than usual were married off prematurely so that their families would have one less mouth to feed. Yet women have a special capacity to get their families through difficult times. They tend to be pragmatic and focus on finding solutions – we at Helvetas see evidence of this every day. When the beneficiary is a woman, the likely impact of every donation is multiplied.

Solidarity makes the world a better place, both here and elsewhere. I am grateful to you for thinking of other people and would ask you to continue to show the same generosity. Thank you.

Theres Frösch, President of Helvetas
Billions of people worldwide do not have access to safe latrines and toilets. As a result, bacteria find their way into people’s drinking water and food. Children are particularly susceptible to gastro-intestinal diseases, and these can have a severe impact on their health and education. Hygienic latrines greatly reduce the number of cases of illness and death. Children benefit most from them, one major advantage being that they can go to school regularly.

Pictured: Sita Devi Oli, schoolgirl, Nepal © Simon Opladen

WHY DOES A WC HELP WITH THE ABCs?
Covid-19 turned the lives of everyone in the world upside down in early 2020. Millions of women and men suddenly no longer knew how to feed their families, while others slid back into poverty because lockdown made it difficult for them to cultivate their fields and sell their produce, or cost them their jobs. Helvetas reacted quickly. In Bhutan, where we train young people for jobs in the construction sector, students built temporary shelters for returning migrants at the Indian border. In Myanmar and Nepal, we funded supplies to quarantine centers. Helvetas worked with local authorities in Bolivia and Nepal, we funded supplies to quarantine centers. Helvetas worked with local authorities in Bolivia and Nepal, we funded supplies to quarantine centers.

Helvetas also raised awareness about the main do’s and don’ts in the pandemic by means of posters, flyers, and radio programs. Soap and disinfectant were distributed, and innovative hand-washing facilities developed (see p. 28ff). We supported the set-up and logistics of an online marketplace and delivery service for agricultural products in Moldova. Throughout, we relied on an approach that had proved decisive in other crisis situations: we built on what was already there.

Local anchoring for rapid action
Powerful players such as China increasingly use development aid as a geopolitical instrument, having discovered developing countries as an investment opportunity. In contrast, more circumspect international NGOs act in a multinational and holistic manner to offer longer-term support.

Some of Helvetas’ strengths – not only, but particularly, in the current emergency – are that it is locally embedded, has a decentralized organizational structure and cultivates a constant exchange of information about experiences, successes and failures to improve the impact of its work. Staff members in partner countries are familiar with local people’s needs and problems, speak their language and know how to get their messages across. They also know the economic, social and political context and work closely with civil society organizations, the private sector, the administrations and government.

This distinguishes Helvetas from many large humanitarian aid organizations, which often have to find their bearings in an emergency and in a new country before they can start working. It also differentiates us from small private initiatives that generally don’t have the networks or enjoy the trust of local authorities.

The pandemic has focused our attention on the essentials. Here are three things we have learned:

We are all in the same boat
Global problems can only be solved by global cooperation. If only people in rich countries are vaccinated, Covid-19 will survive and spread. Now more than ever is the time for international solutions.

Agenda 2030 shows the way
State subsidies and market forces alone cannot come up with sustainable solutions to global, national and local crises. They require greater cooperation between the public sector, private sector and civil society, all of whom have valuable expertise and ideas to contribute to sustainable development.

A link between North and South
Within weeks of the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, Helvetas had managed to adapt 149 programs and projects in almost 30 countries to the new challenges in order to cushion Covid-19’s financial and social impact. This was only possible because of our longstanding partnerships with local organizations, authorities and businesses.

New role, new understanding
How development organizations see their role has changed a great deal. Helvetas has long subscribed to the principle that we should only do things that local and national stakeholders cannot achieve on their own, whether that is because their hands are tied, because they cannot make themselves heard in the relevant places or because they lack the experience or the requisite technical expertise. We always work closely with primary stakeholders, and also with strong local partner organizations that can implement projects competently, efficiently and cost-effectively.

Helvetas can also draw on 65 years of experience – and on the strengths of Switzerland. Our country’s knowledge about democratic and federal structures and good governance, its excellence in research, the dual-track vocational training system and a strong reputation as a mediator offer solid guiding principles in our work. As a learning organization that is constantly exchanging information with stakeholders as well as experts and specialists in our working fields, we can act as a knowledge broker. Climate change is a good example: we support Bolivian smallholder farming families in their battle with increasingly extreme weather conditions, while also sitting on international climate change panels and campaigning for better climate policies in Switzerland.

Helvetas is pooling its knowledge in the new 2021–24 strategy. We are intensifying our work in the areas of water, food and climate. Then we want to create future opportunities for young people and prioritize projects offering high-quality, practice-oriented vocational training so that they will have real job prospects. And, last but not least, we are also creating the right conditions for disadvantaged people to have a say in their future. We are committed to a world in which everyone is free to determine the course of their own lives in dignity and security while managing environmental resources in a sustainable manner and protecting the environment.

126,000
people were supported in 2020 by Helvetas to mitigate the economic impact of Covid-19.
A WORLD WITHOUT POVERTY IS POSSIBLE

Some 730 million people currently live in extreme poverty, on less than US$2 per day. This number may soon grow by a further 100 million due to the coronavirus pandemic. Helvetas is working in 30 countries on four continents to support people to live their lives in self-determined ways, in dignity and without fear of hunger and poverty.

Every single person counts
For each of our 373 projects, Helvetas collects annual data on how many women and men have directly benefited from improvements such as vocational training courses, new water connections or safer migration, and how many organizations and institutions have been strengthened. The figures reflect the situation as of December 31, 2020.
“Our children used to go to school in a building that was close to collapsing,” says Ayinework Agegn from the village of Senkegna. The school was located on swampy ground and was sinking during the rainy season. It also didn’t have enough classrooms, and no room for games during breaktimes. “We complained to the village officials, but the municipal development plan did not consider our priorities,” the young farmer says.

Ethiopia’s first democratic constitution in 1995 laid the foundations for the country’s decentralization. Yet many villages are still waiting for a clean water supply, sufficient classrooms or a health clinic. This is due to the fact that the elected council members usually don’t know their rights and responsibilities nor the laws and existing development plans. They are farmers and smallholders who often have only rudimentary reading and writing skills. They know little about political processes or who their official contacts are.

Federalism is a learning process

Development is only possible if citizens, council members, officials and members of the government are all aware of their rights and duties. Only when there is accountability can there be trust. That was demonstrated by Helvetas’ successful pilot project, which educated the population about when and where they had a say, trained council members, and informed members of district councils and administrations. Training gave participants a better understanding of their areas of competence and their duties.

During the subsequent systematic checks on public spending in project villages in the Amhara region, mismanagement and fraud within the local authority level came to light, including unexplained expenditures. One of the newly formed finance committees found, for instance, that money earmarked for the construction of an agricultural training center had gone missing. Now, according to the committee’s chairman, they have the courage and the means to hold those responsible to account. The inquiry is ongoing, he says.

Helvetas has particularly encouraged and trained women, as well as youth organizations, to stand up for their rights. Ethiopian society is highly hierarchical, and women, including councilwomen, need courage to speak up at meetings, to articulate their concerns and demands, to participate in planning and to demand accountability.

A schoolhouse outside the swamp

Today, functioning water supplies, higher school enrolment rates, health centers and better roads have made lasting improvements to people’s lives. Senkegna village council has also incorporated the villagers’ desire for a new school building for the children of the village into the municipal planning process. The new school’s construction was actively supported by the residents of Senkegna, and now it has a nice playground, eight additional classrooms – and it stands on solid ground.

The conflict in tigray

The population of Ethiopia is composed of many different ethnic groups. At the end of 2020, a smoldering conflict between the central government and the Tigray region escalated into full armed conflict. Helvetas activated its emergency aid fund to provide humanitarian support to internally displaced persons fleeing to Amhara, and is drawing up an emergency aid program for East Tigray with Alliance2015.
Despite economic growth in the Balkans, youth unemployment remains a serious problem. Many parents are desperate for their children to study a prestigious subject like law or medicine, but it is very difficult for university graduates to find jobs, whereas there is a shortage of skilled tradespeople. Helvetas therefore supports the development of the labor market and vocational training programs for young people in Eastern Europe on behalf of SDC. Pictured: Ilber Hasani, welder apprentice (r.), Kosovo © Simon Opladen
WHAT WE DO
Helvetas implements development and humanitarian aid projects. We ensure basic rights, create new perspectives, and strengthen good governance. We also provide technical advisory services, develop subject-specific expertise, and engage in political dialogue and lobbying.

Ensuring basic rights
Water, food and climate
Billions of people lack clean drinking water and access to safe toilets. Millions of people go hungry, and climate change poses a threat to livelihoods all over the world. 4,232,960 women and men worked with Helvetas in 2020 to improve their access to clean water and sanitation, sustainable farming techniques and climate resilient living conditions in rural and urban areas. For a life of dignity.

Creating new perspectives
Skills, jobs and income
Nearly half the world’s population is under 25 years of age, and youth unemployment is high. In partnership with public and private actors, Helvetas in 2020 promoted basic education, skills development, and private sector development as well as financial inclusion for 791,594 people to create gainful employment and income opportunities, exploiting the opportunities of the digital age. For a life free of poverty.

Strengthening good governance
Voice, inclusion and cohesion
There are 80 million refugees around the world, governments are restricting the rights of their citizens, and women and disadvantaged groups are often marginalized. In 2020 Helvetas worked with our partners to empower 431,045 people, especially women, to participate in decision-making processes. Helvetas supports displaced people and migrants and works with governments to develop favorable conditions for social cohesion to flourish. For greater justice.

Alleviating suffering
Humanitarian response
149 Helvetas projects, adding up to US$ 6,470,230, were adapted or initiated in 2020 to protect vulnerable people from coronavirus and mitigate the pandemic’s economic fallout. Helvetas has also acted swiftly in conflict situations by supporting local authorities and villages that take in internally displaced persons and thus prevent further conflicts. For greater security.

HELVETAS AT A GLANCE
5,455,599 people lifted themselves out of poverty in 2020 with your help.
SUSPENSION BRIDGES AND MOTHERS’ PARLIAMENTS

Our benefactors, along with foundations and partners like SDC, have ensured that hundreds of thousands of women and men have gained access to clean water and sanitation, improved their nutritional situation and adapted their livelihoods to climate change. This support enables people to lift themselves out of poverty.

Popular favorite

The mothers’ parliaments of the Panji Jibon climate and water project in Bangladesh came first in the People’s Choice category of the “2020 Water ChangeMaker Awards”. Set up as part of the project, these mothers’ parliaments campaign for the human right to water and have already persuaded the relevant authorities to double their budgets for drinking water provision. The fields and drinking water of families in the Ganges delta are becoming salty due to the rising sea level; the project is supporting them in their struggle for climate justice.

Digitally connected in the field

In India, Pakistan, Myanmar, Madagascar, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, Helvetas promotes the resource-efficient and water-saving production of rice and cotton on behalf of SDC and in cooperation with companies. Due to Covid-19 most agricultural advisory services were provided online in 2020. Helvetas’ partner organizations were able to support knowledge-sharing and production with personalized calls, WhatsApp chats, films, Zoom training sessions and recordings.

ENGLISH OKT

Roughly 70% of the population of Tanzania farm for their living, which makes improving their income from their work in the fields an essential factor in poverty alleviation. Mwamini Musa has learned how to get higher rice yields and prevent post-harvest losses. She has passed on her newly acquired knowledge to other female rice farmers, and the extra income has enabled her to buy more land. The women have also started to produce parboiled rice, which is richer in vitamins and nutrients and has opened up new markets for them.

“Instead of 13 sacks of rice, I now harvest 30.”
Mwamini Musa, rice farmer, Tanzania

WHAT WE DO

Our result between 2018 and 2020:

978,797 people have gained access to drinking water

Result: 978,797

Goal: 750,000

Helvetas helps to achieve the following Agenda 2030 goals:

1 No poverty
2 Zero hunger
6 Clean water and sanitation
9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure
12 Responsible consumption and production
13 Climate action
17 Partnerships for the goals
557,081
people have gained access
to drinking water
with Helvetas since 2020.

268,082
in Africa

182,706
in Latin America

106,293
in Asia

ENSURING BASIC RIGHTS

Safer latrines
In just six months, 15,556 women, men and children from 32 villages in Guatemala have fundamentally improved their basic sanitation and, among other things, built their own latrines so that they no longer have to defecate in the open. The villages’ achievements are officially recognized with a state certificate.

Shorter trips
Each year ten to fifteen new suspension bridges are inaugurated in Ethiopia, that connect remote rural settlements to nearby roads. They are built by Ethiopian technicians who have been taught this craft by Nepalese bridge engineers in a South-South knowledge transfer. Helvetas, SDC, the government of Nepal and many other funders have facilitated the construction of 8,600 suspension bridges in Nepal to date. Now, the Amhara regional government has committed to cover 80% of the cost of building these bridges in Ethiopia – because they provide an important service to the poorest of the poor.

“’We saw clearly that cities can adapt’

What specific challenges do cities face in the coronavirus crisis?
The pandemic increased urban poverty, especially in countries with large informal economies like Bolivia. Small entrepreneurs, urban and peri-urban farmers, household workers, and solid waste collectors lost their income. Cities therefore face a challenge to provide a multi-dimensional response to Covid-19 that guarantees health and collective quality of life.

How did Helvetas manage to convince people to take steps to cope with Covid-19?
We had to initiate behavioral change in authorities and citizens. For this, decision-makers had to issue a unified message. We also had to guarantee access to water for hygiene measures for people without that access, to name just one of the many challenges.

What did Helvetas learn during this time of crisis?
We saw clearly that cities can adapt. There were innovative approaches with digital means that opened new communication channels and are now promoting economic recovery. For example, the distribution of vegetables from urban farmers to improve food security in the city.

Sustainability is a crucial concern for every Helvetas project. In our water programs, this means that fees are levied for water use to finance the costs of maintaining and repairing the infrastructure. During the coronavirus pandemic, with its attendant hygiene issues, many governments waived these water fees – a very popular decision. The question now is how the service providers in charge of these water systems will be able to carry on. An even tougher question is: how can the fees be reintroduced now that local people have gotten used to water being free?

Beatriz Lizarazu works as an urban and spatial planning specialist for Helvetas Bolivia and coordinates the Ciudades resilientes-CoREUrban project

More about our working area Water, Food and Climate: helvetas.org/basicrights

CHALLENGES WE FACED IN 2020
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EXAM SUCCESS AND CAREER ADVICE

Helvetas’ donors and partners support basic education for children and adults who have not been able to go to school and enable disadvantaged young people to develop their professional skills. By working with local enterprises, Helvetas promotes an inclusive private sector and fair value chains, allowing people to create a self-determined existence for themselves.

“Every hour young women and men spend working in the wrong job is a loss to them and to the economy.”

Joniada Hito is head of Albania’s first career counseling center, which opened its doors in 2020. Its origin can be traced back to a direct personal exchange – initiated by Helvetas as part of a long-standing SDC vocational training project – between the heads of a career advice project in Albania and the director of a career counseling center in the Swiss canton of Ticino.

A survey of 471 former students who had attended vocational skills development programs in Myanmar revealed that 85% of them were either self-employed or had found employment. Their monthly earnings exceed the national minimum wage. In Benin, 768 out of 782 recently graduated young entrepreneurs made a success of their own small businesses or farms – a 98% success rate!

A Helvetas project which aims to protect the unique, biodiversity-rich rainforests of northern Madagascar helps vanilla producers to derive an income from their crops so that they do not have to chop down the forest for money. Starting in 2020, vanilla buyers have made a contractual commitment to buy the farmers’ entire crop, as well as paying an environmental premium to fund the protection of the rainforest. A first in Madagascar.

“I have to pass my final exam because I want to be a teacher when I grow up.”

Moufira Bio Idrissou, schoolgirl, Benin

A SDC project in Benin, jointly implemented by Helvetas and Solidar Suisse, gives a second chance to children like Moufira Bio Idrissou, who had to leave school prematurely. So far, 9,000 children, approximately 6,000 of whom are girls, have been able to catch up on the years of school they missed. The fact that they are taught first in the local language and only later in French has gained their parents’ trust. What’s more, the number of girls marrying early and the number of early pregnancies have both fallen. Having passed her exam, Moufira is now at secondary school.

More about our working area
Skills, Jobs and Income:
helvetas.org/newperspectives
WHAT WE DO

Impressive sums

One hundred and ten savings and credit groups founded in the past five years in Tanzania, with a total of 3,300 members, had saved more than US$500,000 by 2020 and disbursed loans of more than US$350,000 over the same period. About 70% of these loans were taken up by women, who invested the money in farming or in other income-generating activities.

Does e-learning open up new possibilities for them?

There has been a huge surge in e-learning during the Covid-19 crisis, and it’s true that women have benefited. The fact that e-learning isn’t bound to a particular place and a specific time means that they can combine their education with their duties as caregivers. E-learning also allows them to acquire so-called “21st-century skills”, which are more and more important in the workplace and therefore give them access to better-paid jobs.

What are the challenges when it comes to e-learning?

Access to digital devices and internet connections remains a problem in many countries, especially for women due to the “digital gender gap”. That’s why we use digital solutions that work offline too. There is always complementary practical training as well. A lot of things can be simulated using new technologies such as virtual reality or illustrated with videos and animations, but students must gain practical experience in the workplace. Social factors also play an important role because education helps to shape a young person’s character and improves their life skills. So Helvetas emphasizes a blended approach that combines digital and hands-on learning.

An opportunity for all

In Bhutan, the theoretical part of training courses in a project for budding carpenters and masons was videoed and made available online as well as being broadcast via social media. This prevents young women and men from remote areas from having to drop out and facilitates life-long learning.

Vocational training has a bad reputation in many countries. It is seen as second rate, even though it often produces better employment opportunities than for someone with a university degree. Women face additional obstacles.

Depending on the country it can be difficult for women to do vocational training. Why?

Women are confronted with additional socio-cultural barriers, for example the problem of being accepted in male-dominated professions, no safe learning environment, or a lack of female teachers. In our experience, though, it is not so much the training that is problematic for women but entering in the job market and holding down a job. Women are often less self-confident, receive no backing from their families or are fully occupied with housework.

“Women benefit from e-Learning”

Creating new perspectives

Women are confronted with additional obstacles.

Our results between 2018 and 2020:

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Challenge we faced in 2020

The coronavirus pandemic led to the closure of many schools and training centers in 2020. The highly committed country and project teams working on Helvetas projects often came up with new and alternative approaches involving digital courses, small-group learning or decentralized classes held in villages. Things are made more difficult when violence directly jeopardizes the safety of local people and staff members, as in West Africa. According to UNICEF, more than eight million children (55% of the total) are unable to attend school in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger due to terrorist attacks. Elsewhere, it is social conventions or long, dangerous journeys that prevent girls from going to school. E-learning is a promising alternative because it is not bound to a specific place or time.

26,562 young women and men learned a trade in 2020, either during a short practical training course or through a longer course.

Women can now benefit from three years of accumulated knowhow. The vocational training institute in the country of Bangladesh has been able to gain approval ‘s national education system for the theoretical part of its courses in food processing. Every vocational training institute in the country will now benefit from three years of accumulated knowhow. The Shamerto project trained a total of 21,000 young women and men, 73% of whom have succeeded in setting up their own businesses or found employment.

CREATING NEW PERSPECTIVES

Nationwide approval

Bangladesh’s national education system has adopted the curricula and training modules of a successful Helvetas project that provides vocational training courses in food processing. Every vocational training institute in the country will now benefit from three years of accumulated knowhow. The Shamerto project trained a total of 21,000 young women and men, 73% of whom have succeeded in setting up their own businesses or found employment.

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LIFE PLANS AND QUOTAS FOR WOMEN

With the support of many donors, Helvetas and its partner organizations prevent radicalization and conflicts. They strengthen authorities and local governments to improve their services and make them accessible to all. They also inform women and men about their rights and duties as citizens so that they can participate in political decision-making processes.

Preventing radicalization

Helvetas is working on an innovative project in Kyrgyzstan to prevent radicalization and promote dialogue between the generations. The education ministry has now integrated this approach into its national curriculum, bringing experience-oriented workshops and interactive groupwork to public and religious schools. These help to bind young people into the life of the community and strengthen their resilience to violence and extremist rhetoric.

Pathways to a better future

About five million children and young people are on the move on migration routes through West and North Africa. In 2020 SDC commissioned Helvetas, Terre des hommes and GIZ International to give these young people, wherever they happen to be, the opportunity to continue their school- or do a vocational training course. The aim is not just to protect them but to offer them new prospects so they can realize their life plans. The initial phase of this cross-border project will be implemented in Morocco, Tunisia, Mali, Niger and Guinea.

A new civil society

With funding from the EU, Helvetas Bhutan supports civil society organizations to promote women’s rights and democratic participation, boost social enterprises and help the most vulnerable in society. This has led to the establishment of organizations combating domestic violence, transparency initiatives campaigning against corruption, training for craftspeople, and has given rise to many other projects. Helvetas has been cooperating with the government of Bhutan for many years to foster local governance and socio-economic development.

“Land titles offer the security to invest”

In the parts of Vietnam where there are ethnic minorities, farmland and forests are coming under increasing pressure.

Why does Helvetas invest in land rights for ethnic minorities in Vietnam?

Their livelihoods depend on land resources, but they are often deprived of demanding their rights. An example of this is that people who are displaced – for the construction of a hydroelectric dam, for example – often struggle to rebuild a stable life for themselves. Also, although the law recognizes that everyone is equally entitled to land rights, there remains a significant gender gap.

What are the positive effects of having land titles?

Land titles can help to ensure that people can invest in land and use it to improve their livelihoods. In addition, they have equal rights when resolving land disputes.

What are the challenges people face when they ask for land rights?

Ethnic minorities have limited access to the information they need, and it is difficult for them to raise their voices about land rights issues. Restrictions on civil society organizations and their relative lack of resources make it hard for them to advocate effectively. Helvetas and Land Alliance (LANDA) help vulnerable minorities to claim their land rights and their legal access to forest resources.

Helvetas Vietnam and CRED, their local partner organization, were selected as “Partner of the Year” by the Australian foreign ministry (DFAT).

Helvetas helps to achieve the following Agenda 2030 goals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Peace, Justice and strong institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gender equity</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Reduced inequalities</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sustainable cities and communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROTECTIVE GEAR AND FOOT PEDALS

Helvetas provides swift and straightforward humanitarian aid to disaster and crisis areas thanks to generous donations from private individuals, foundations, Swiss cantons, municipalities and companies, and contributions from Swiss Solidarity, UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM and SDC. This allows those who have been affected to resume their normal lives as quickly as possible.

Help for internally displaced persons

Helvetas also provided humanitarian aid in Burkina Faso and Mozambique in 2020. Both of these African countries saw hundreds of thousands of people forced to leave their homes after extremist groups attacked their villages. The internally displaced persons and their host communities are being supported with better access to drinking water and basic sanitation facilities. This is Helvetas’ contribution to greater local social cohesion so that conflicts can be avoided, and displaced people can start a new life.

Vouchers for the poorest

A transparent system of food vouchers caught on during the Covid-19 lockdown in Nepal. It was developed by municipal councils and supported by the Nepal Agricultural Services Development Programme, which is funded by SDC and assisted by Helvetas. The vouchers benefit the neediest people, and a sophisticated system that offers the option of collection or direct delivery avoids large gatherings and promotes local businesses and producers.

Youth activists

In Benin, young water and hygiene specialists from the national branch of the World Youth Parliament for Water have been asked by Helvetas to make useful hand-washing facilities by adding simple taps to the familiar yellow water canisters. Young people were provided with instructions so they could start production, and they have made over 500 of them so far. Poor households were provided with hand-washing canisters free of charge.

No outsiders have been allowed to enter the Rohingya camp in Bangladesh since the start of the pandemic. Nevertheless, Helvetas has been able to carry on working inside the world’s largest refugee camp thanks to 500 Rohingya volunteers like Mohammed Said, who is himself a refugee. These volunteers informed 220,000 people about the coronavirus and measures to prevent it spreading and distributed 180,000 hygiene kits. They also organized a painting competition to raise children’s awareness about the protective measures.
Every part of Helvetas’ response to the pandemic had an awareness-raising component, in particular on protective hygiene behavior. Economic support was just as important, however.

Which kind of aid was most effective during the coronavirus crisis in 2020? We know that people altered their behavior, but it is difficult to say what effect that had on the spread of the virus. We have observed a measurable impact in economic and governance terms. I’ll give two examples. Because economic migrants from Myanmar were unable to return to Thailand, Helvetas distributed money for three months to allow them to find alternative jobs in their country. In Albania, restrictions on movement meant that local representatives weren’t able to meet. By putting in place teleconferencing systems we have ensured the continuity of democratic processes.

How can Helvetas support the people who have been worst hit by the crisis or even by multiple crises?

Those who have been affected know better than anyone else what they need, so projects have to be developed together with communities and local authorities. Our role is to be a catalyst and to promote knowledge. Dignity is crucial: people who receive help don’t want handouts. They want to contribute their part, for example by acting in the efforts.

Bruno Husquine is team leader for humanitarian response at Helvetas.

Where could Helvetas have done better?

That question is the basis of an ongoing large-scale evaluation. I’m thinking in particular of small and medium-sized enterprises. I’ve been struck by the accuracy with which certain colleagues rapidly anticipated the difficulties and put forward solutions such as covering additional storage costs when sales were low. It’s important to have intimate knowledge of production and distribution systems to mitigate the financial difficulties that could potentially provoke a cascade of business failures.

We could have made better use of this knowledge worldwide to provide even more help to small companies.

Looking for nomads

Non-sedentary groups often learned of the pandemic later than others. The Helvetas team in Niger has tracked down nomad families to inform them about the dangers of the disease, and hygiene measures.

It’s no easy task to find them during the migration season. But Helvetas’ long-standing commitment in the country on behalf of SDC, and its experience in building drinking troughs for nomads’ herds, made it possible to find them – and quickly build trust. Everyone got involved in this awareness-raising campaign – even Helvetas’ drivers informed passing nomadic families about Covid-19.

Ingenious engineers

While they were looking for innovative hand-washing solutions, Helvetas in Nepal came up with the idea of foot pedal-powered hand-washing stations. A local engineer implemented these plans in his workshop and was literally overwhelmed by the demand. Now the Nepalese government, Unicef and other international organizations have ordered more of the stations from him. This success has been shared with other countries. In Bolivia (see picture above) the same hand-washing stations are being made on the basis of Nepalese construction plans.
WHAT WE DO

POLITICS AND E-HAPPINESS

Helvetas informs the public in a variety of ways about the lives of people in developing countries. This includes an exhibition about global happiness, discussions with students, and debates about development policy.

“An active civil society strengthens direct democracy”

Why does Helvetas get involved in politics at all?
Ever since Helvetas was founded, our statutes have stated that we shall participate in the shaping of public opinion and in the political decision-making process on issues of development policy. There is no contradiction between our work in the field and getting involved in domestic debates about development policy. In fact, the opposite is true. The two complement each other because they both strive for the same goal of helping people living in poverty to claim their rights and live in dignity.

There are currently proposals in parliament to restrict political advocacy by NGOs.

These attempts are not only deplorable but short-sighted. Awareness-raising by NGOs about development policy helps people to form their own opinions and thus contributes to lively democratic debate within Switzerland. An active Swiss civil society acts as a political check and balance alongside the state and the economy, which strengthens direct democracy.

E-Happy Hours

A postponed exhibition opening, closed museums, fewer in-person events and visitors: the exhibition “Global Happiness – What do we need to be happy?” has faced a challenging year. Nevertheless, many people were particularly interested in aspects of global happiness during the coronavirus crisis. In response, the exhibition team quickly arranged additional digital events and livestreams with interesting guests on happiness-related subjects. This idea was a big hit with the public, and Helvetas will incorporate it into its post-pandemic planning too.

Why did Helvetas campaign for the initiative’s goals?
Helvetas speaks up in Switzerland whenever the interests of people in developing countries are at stake. Their lives are increasingly affected by decisions taken abroad, and that includes in Switzerland – for example, when a Swiss multinational digs for gold in West Africa or the Swiss army places an order for new uniforms.

Helvetas’ commitment to the Responsible Business Initiative in Switzerland received approval but also provoked opposition.

“Establish a relationship of trust with migrants”

The Safer Migration Project (SaMi) in Nepal supports migrants and their families throughout the “migration cycle”. However, keeping in touch for monitoring purposes is a challenge.

What are the challenges?
Migrants abroad have busy schedules and limited access to a phone or the internet. The migrants also need to feel confident before they will speak about any difficulties. Conducting interviews with women who have been left behind is difficult because they might not have full information about the employment situation of their husbands, sons or brothers.

The Safer Migration Project (SaMi) is an SDC project implemented by the government of Nepal with the technical support of Helvetas.

Many levels of success

Helvetas spent many years building the capacity of civil society organizations in Myanmar – among other ways, through fundraising training sessions. With its national partner, the Local Resource Centre, Helvetas trained over 1,000 representatives of civil society. An independent evaluation, commissioned by the funder, the EU, showed that these trainees were then able to improve their access to funding, consolidate their networks, and better represent the interests of citizens. The study concluded that the simultaneous strengthening of individuals, organizations and networks amplified the impact of the project (which was also implemented in other countries) and exceeded its expected results.

Further information about the EU project: tinyurl.com/k9hijnw5

Project participants note their stories of change.

Promoting Knowledge

Helvetas regularly and consistently evaluates the success and impact of its projects in a number of ways. The aim is to offer successful approaches to others, design even more efficient projects and defeat poverty through innovation and persistence.

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“How do we stay in touch with migrants for monitoring purposes?”

Information about migrants, their motivations and their origins is first collected when women and men visit the Migrant Resource Centers to inform themselves of the employment situation of their husbands, sons or brothers.

Which method has proven to be the best?
The continuous follow up and assistance, and accompanying the family left behind – SaMi is able to establish a relationship of trust with migrants. The first encounter with the project happens at local level and “face-to-face”, which helps when following up with migrants and their families later by phone.

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Whether it be water and hygiene projects, primary education or vocational training, Helvetas always makes sure that its activities particularly empower and encourage women and disadvantaged groups to stand up for themselves and voice their demands. The result is that women are having their say, taking up leading positions and, together with men, toppling outdated hierarchies, as Saveedra Ordoñez (pictured) from San Pedro de Buenavista in Bolivia is doing. © Simon Opladen
SUPPORT AND FLEXIBILITY

The 2020 financial statement shows an increase in revenue to CHF 142.9 million thanks to an extraordinarily high level of donations from the Swiss public during the Covid-19 crisis. Total expenditure for the year amounted to CHF 137.1 million. Some projects were deferred, and CHF 2.9 million in earmarked donations was therefore transferred to the respective funds. A financial result of CHF 0.7 million also contributed to a positive annual result of CHF 3.6 million.

Financial management in the age of Covid-19
In early 2020, as the world almost ground to a halt due to the coronavirus, Helvetas wondered if its planning for the 2020 financial year was still realistic. The management team subsequently sat down with the finance team and the board to examine project implementation and the evolution of costs and donations. We revised our financial plans four times over the course of the year. Our funding and implementing partners were extremely flexible, and Helvetas designed solutions for continuing or adapting our projects in Covid-19-affected circumstances. We were greatly relieved in the autumn when we realized that, from a financial perspective, the year of coronavirus would not be an annus horribilis for Helvetas.

Financial audit
KPMG audited the accounts and financial statements and approved these May 7, 2021. Their audit report and the complete 2020 financial report can be viewed at our website helvetas.org/finanzbericht.

The financial statements are presented in CHF thousand (KCHF). Due to the selected number format, there may be rounding differences between individual amounts and totals.
HELVETAS ANNUAL REPORT 2020

WHO MAKES IT POSSIBLE

OUR ORGANIZATION

PIONEERING AND COMMITTED

Helvetas is a politically and denominationally neutral association, supported by over 100,000 members, benefactors and donors as well as regional volunteer groups. Board members work on an unpaid basis and support Helvetas with generous private donations.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Therese Frösch, President, Bern, former National Councilor, President of the Boards of Sprites Bern and Domicil Bern AG, since 2013

Peter Niggli, Vice President, Zurich, journalist, author, expert in international development, since 2015

Jörg Frieden, Freiburg, Dr. oec. publ., Development Economist, President of the Board of SIFEM, since 2018

Marie Garnier, Fribourg, former member of the government of the Canton Fribourg, Director ProLait, since 2015

Angelo Gnädinger, Geneva, lic. jur., former General Director of the ICRC 2002–2010, Mohammed VI Institute, since 2011

Hainz Häni, Bern, Dr. rer. pol., President of the Boards of Domicil Holding AG and UPD Bern, since 2016

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Jean-Philippe Jutzi, Verbiere VS and Lausanne, communications consultant, since 2020

Ena Karrer-Roedi, Zurich, Dr. sc. nat, ETH, environmental scientist, General Manager Eco Entrepreneur Foundation, since 2019

André Lüthi, Bern, tourism expert, President of the Board and CEO Globetrotter Group, since 2009

Peter Messerli, Bern, Prof. for Sustainable Development, Director Wyss Academy for Nature, since 2020

Dina Pomeranz, Zurich, Assistant Professor of Applied Economics, University of Zurich, since 2020

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Hansi Voigt, Zurich, Partner dasNetz.ch, Management consultant, Founder Watson, since 2019

Ueli Winzenried, Bern, B1. oec., HHW, Business consultant Burkhalter Attorneys in Bern/Zurich, since 2019

Boards of Spitex Bern and Domicil

Director of the ICRC 2002–2010, Geneva, lic. jur., former General Councilor, President of the Board of Directors and the Management Board, since 2015

Annette Koff, Joint Head of International Programs

Rupe Mukerji, Joint Head of Advisory Services

Esther Haldimann, Joint Head of Advisory Services

Stefan Stole, Head of Marketing and Communications

Erich Wigger, Head of Finance and Services

* Formal member of the board

MANAGEMENT BOARD

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Remo Guza, Deputy Director Joint Head of International Programs

Annette Koff, Joint Head of International Programs

Rupe Mukerji, Joint Head of Advisory Services

Esther Haldimann, Joint Head of Advisory Services

Stefan Stole, Head of Marketing and Communications

Erich Wigger, Head of Finance and Services

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Mario Cervidílo Guasch, Lumino TI, Dr. med. FMH, States Councilor

Sibel Arslan, Basel, lic. iur., National Councilor

Claudia Friedli, St. Gallen, Dr. sc. nat, ETH, National Councilor

Therese Frösch and Peter Niggli represent the Management Board in the Advisory Board

Resigned, effective October 2020: Christine Bulliard-Marbach, Freiburg

Resigned, effective June 2020: Rudolf Baumgartner, Zurich

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

All organizations with which Helvetas has signed a framework agreement or on whose boards Helvetas has a seat are listed.

Alliance2015, The Hague • Alliance Sud (Swiss Alliance of Development Organizations), Bern • Alliance for Water Stewardship, London • Helvetas Intercooperation gGmbH, Bonn • Helvetas USA Inc., Minneapolis • Knowledge Management for Development KM4DEV, Zurich • L’Association Intercoporation Madagascar AIF, Antananarivo, Madagascar • Max Havelaar-Stiftung, Basel • Development and International Cooperation FoBBIZ, Zurich • Knowledge Management for Development FoBBIZ, Zurich • Personalvorsorgestiftung der Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, Zurich • Development and International Cooperation FoBBIZ, Zurich • SwitIZ for the government of the Canton of Zurich • Plattform Schweizer NGO’s • Skat Consulting and Skat Foundation, St. Gallen • Swiss Fair Trade, Basel • Swiss Forum for Skills Development and International Cooperation FoBBIZ, Zurich • Swiss NGO DRR Platform, Lucerne • Alliance against arms exports to civil war countries, Zurich • Center for Rural Economy Development Alliance2015, The Hague • Alliance Sud (Swiss Alliance of Development Organizations), Bern • Alliance for Water Stewardship, London • Helvetas Intercooperation gGmbH, Bonn • Helvetas USA Inc., Minneapolis • Knowledge Management for Development KM4DEV, Zurich • L’Association Intercoporation Madagascar AIF, Antananarivo, Madagascar • Max Havelaar-Stiftung, Basel • Millennium Water Alliance, Washington DC, USA • Personalvorsorgestiftung der Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, Zurich • Platform Schweizer NGO’s • Skat Consulting and Skat Foundation, St. Gallen • Swiss Fair Trade, Basel • Swiss Forum for Skills Development and International Cooperation FoBBIZ, Zurich • Swiss NGO DRR Platform, Lucerne • Swiss Platform for peace-building KOFF/Swisspeace, Bern • Swiss Water Partnership, Zurich • Swiss Water & Sanitation NGO Consortium, Zurich

The General Assembly, the organization’s highest body, meets once a year. It elects the members of the Board of Directors and determines the mission statement.

The Board of Directors, the highest executive body, is responsible for the organization’s strategy and for approving the annual budget.

The Management Board is responsible for planning, implementing, and supervising the projects, programs, and actions within Switzerland and abroad.

Potential conflicts of interest of members of the Board of Directors and the Management Board are listed in the financial report.

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Fritz Buser was born into a humble farming family, but he became a businessman and founded the Sunstar chain of hotels. In 2009 he decided to sell his majority stake and set up a foundation. It wouldn’t be efficient to implement their own development projects, says Rolf Buser, his son, and that is why Esperanza seeks out reliable and experienced organizations with which it can forge constructive partnerships. “My father wanted to give poor people, who were not as fortunate as he was to be born in Switzerland, the chance to lead independent and dignified lives,” Rolf Buser says. Helvetas from the beginning was one of those organizations and “has developed into one of our most important partners over the past ten years.” The partnership began with a drinking water and hygiene project in Guatemala. “It was developed from a baseline study and the vision was that it should become a model for the whole country. That won me over,” Rolf Buser, who has visited the project several times, thinks that it is on the right path to achieve that goal. The project initially self-funded latrines and drinking water systems. Over time cooperation institutions and ministries were increasingly brought on board to take over responsibility for the infrastructure. “It is impressive to see how many municipalities in the project areas now have a comprehensive sanitation system. The Helvetas project really has had the intended leverage effect,” Rolf Buser thinks that this success is partly down to the local experts, the efficient and effective use of funds, and Helvetas’ networks. “At Esperanza we consciously foster long-term partnerships and contribute substantial amounts of funding. In return, we expect transparency, an ability to learn, continuity and a lasting and measurable impact.” Trust is a prerequisite. “Our partnership with Helvetas has all of these qualities.”

For long-term partnerships

Stiftung Esperanza funds water and hygiene projects in Latin America and Africa along with skills development projects to promote small businesses. It is one of our many partners that enables people to live their lives in security and dignity, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude for their support.

Rafaela Marroquin de Lorenzo de Verduo from El Peque, Guatemala, is happy to have clean water.
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In **2020**, thanks to a wave of solidarity, Helvetas received over **36 million** Swiss francs in donations and other income totaling **106 million** francs. This allowed **1,445** committed Helvetas staff and **850** partner organizations worldwide to help **2.5 million** women and **2.9 million** men in **30** countries forge a life without poverty.