



Bertile Vigniking, shop owner and Marie N'dah, Anfanni project, Benin, Photographer: Simon B. Opladen

SKILLS, JOBS AND INCOME STRATEGY

Creating new perspectives during times of growing inequality

Multiple crises related to global pandemics, climate change or armed conflict exacerbate existing inequalities in terms of access to quality education, skills development, business development support and employment. Helvetas supports children, youth, and adults to find jobs and micro small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) to create decent employment and to generate an income, also in humanitarian situations. Helvetas works at the continuum of basic education, laying the foundation for prosperity, vocational skills development preparing youth and adults for the world of work and private sector development to create employment opportunities. Hereby, Helvetas strives for a green and just transition to ensure that economic development is inclusive and environmentally sustainable.

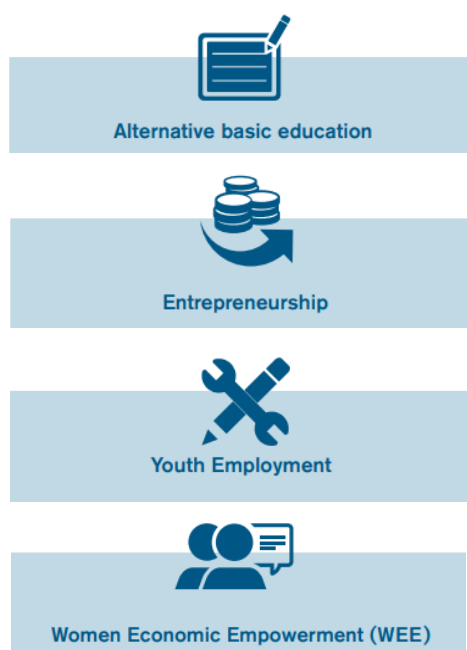
HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation



Weinbergstr. 22a, PO Box, CH-8021 Zurich
Maulbeerstr. 10, PO Box, CH-3001 Bern
info@helvetas.org, helvetas.org

HOLISTIC APPROACH FOR INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

During the period of 2024–2028 we aim at strengthening our work at the interface between basic education (BED), vocational skills development (VSD), and private sector development (PSD). Experience of SJI projects in over 32 countries has shown that a holistic approach is required to promote inclusive economic development, foster employment, and generate income opportunities for disadvantaged groups. This holistic approach is summarized in Figure 1. It foresees interventions on both the supply and demand side of markets to contribute to decent work and green and social economic development. Special emphasis will be given within this interface to the following topics:

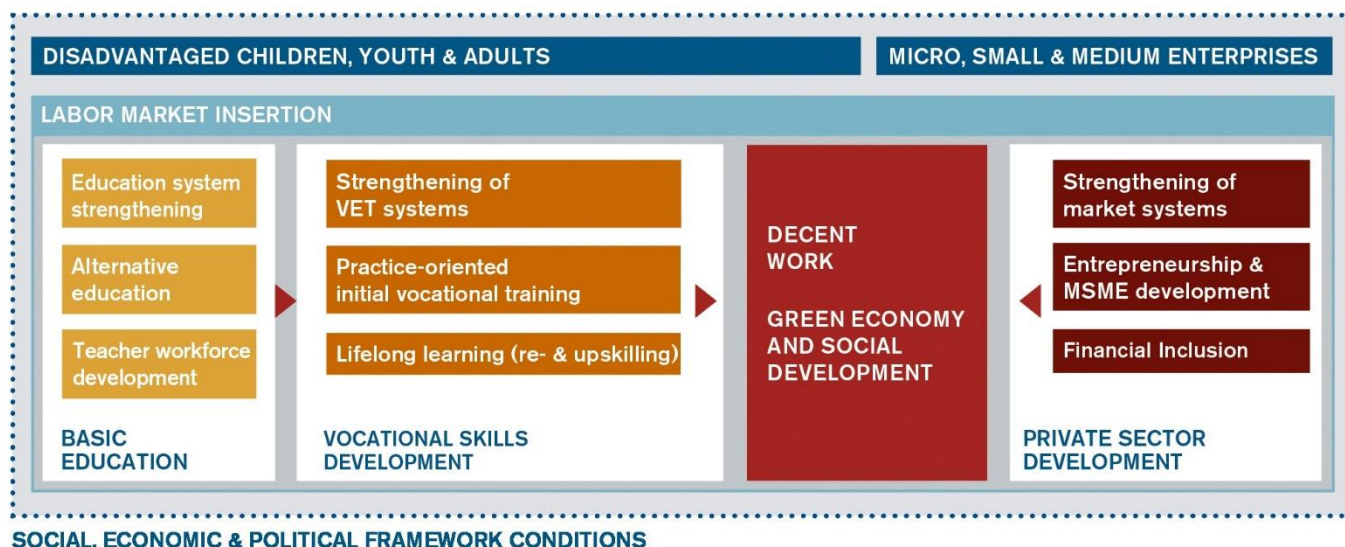


Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is not possible without the private sector. To bridge the immense finance gap, governments, private sector and civil society make a collective effort. SJI aims at strengthening **Private Sector Engagement (PSE)** to contribute to the achievement of SDG 4 (High Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). SJI also continues working with the **Inclusive System Approach (ISA)** to support a systemic change that leads to long lasting behavioral and structural changes among stakeholders. Our experience with these approaches combined with our longstanding partnerships and deep understanding of local contexts represent our unique advantage.



Skills training in virtual reality, Tanzania, Photographer: Franz Thiel

A special focus will be given to two key trends: **Green Economy** and **Digitalization**. SJI is mainstreaming these topics in all working fields, starting from digital and green skills in education and skills development to supporting system actors in changing their practices and business models for more inclusive and green growth.



SOCIAL, ECONOMIC & POLITICAL FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

Figure 1: Skills, Jobs and Income Working Area overview

BASIC EDUCATION

Beyond its contribution to economic development as the foundation for any professional skills development, education is a human right and a key factor of social cohesion. Basic education is often undermined by a scarcity of resources, an inappropriate teaching workforce, and difficulties in including the most vulnerable.

Helvetas focuses mainly on flexible and cost-effective education services: education alternatives for out-of-school children, the integration of migrants into existing education systems, catch-up of basic skills in VSD, and the provision of education in emergency situations. This entails collaborating with local stakeholders, contributing to the development of the teaching workforce, promoting digital learning and striving for systemic change. Helvetas has a comparative advantage due to its experience in linking basic education and VSD e.g. through functional literacy and numeracy in VSD programs.

SEE



Training in Skills Development, Project S4RLD, Myanmar

The SEE Opportunities project (Myanmar) illustrates the continuum approach between education, vocational training, and the job market in a crisis context. The goal is for displaced persons to become productive members of their host communities and participate in furthering their common resilience, socio-economic growth, and development by strengthening key system actors (educators, trainers and entrepreneurs). Children, youth, and unemployed persons will be supported in their progress from basic education to skills training and on to employment. Complementary protection services and peace building will also benefit the wider community.

VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Vocational skills development (VSD) is a broad concept encompassing all organized learning processes (e.g., formal, non-formal, learning, and work-based learning) for developing a broad range of knowledge, skills and attitudes deemed indispensable for meaningful participation in work and life. The broader goal of VSD is to get trained people into gainful (self-) employment in the formal and informal economy. To achieve this, Helvetas facilitates the development of VSD programs that meet present and future labor market needs and support labor market insertion, especially of marginalized people.

Helvetas focuses on three main areas:

- 1) **Strengthening Vocational Education and Training (VET) Systems:** The goals of any VET system should include a social and an economic dimension. First, the VET system aims to contribute to the competitiveness and sustained growth of the economy by providing a skilled labor force according to the demand of the economy. Second, it aims to provide people with valuable education and training. Hence, it can contribute to livelihoods, social and labor market inclusion, and, thus, poverty reduction. Helvetas supports national VET systems in improving their performance and inclusiveness. Many Helvetas projects are inspired by the experience from the dual VET system in Switzerland e.g. on integrating the private sector in the TVET cycle or career guidance.
- 2) **Practice-oriented initial vocational education:** The interlinkage between the world of training and the world of work is crucial for VSD. To ensure that skill trainings lead to employment, Helvetas applies different approaches, such as results based financing (RBF) to increase effectiveness or dual elements like worked based learning. Close cooperation between training providers and employers is needed. Practice-oriented training interventions can happen in non-formal as well as in formalized settings.
- 3) **Lifelong learning (Upskilling and Reskilling):** Global changes in labor markets require all workers to engage in a continuous learning process, regardless of their skill level. Innovative and competitive companies, which are crucial for job creation, depend on

highly trained specialists. Helvetas therefore promotes upskilling and reskilling as a key area. Upskilling/reskilling can help employers and companies to develop the skills needed to remain competitive. Helvetas also works on quality assurance of training courses and providers, and incentivizing employers and individuals to contribute to lifelong learning by, for instance, enabling career guidance.

PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

Every year, millions of youth enter the labor market. The local private sector in our partner countries must be strengthened to absorb them and enhance quality and quantity of jobs. MSMEs are engines of growth, but they need support to increase their performance, for example through access to information, markets, inputs, knowledge, technology, innovation and markets. They need both non-financial services (business development support) and financial services (access to finance, financial literacy). The main objective is to enhance MSMEs and entrepreneurs' ability to compete better in domestic and international markets. This increased competitiveness will ultimately lead to decent job creation and contribute to economic growth. MSMEs and start-ups depend on conducive framework conditions, and for this reason, the PSD working field pays particular attention to advocacy. For example, it supports business associations in strengthening their business ecosystem and enhancing their organizational capacities to better support and represent their member companies.

Helvetas focuses on three main areas:

- 1) **Strengthening market systems:** Helvetas applies a market system approach to reach underserved people in a more sustainable way. Key elements include understanding root causes for exclusion, adopting a facilitating role through partnerships with system actors, and emphasizing financial and institutional sustainability and scale. Capacity building and ownership of system actors are key to enhancing access to markets for MSMEs and entrepreneurs. Instead of directly supporting local businesses, Helvetas strengthens private and public system actors, such as business development service providers, financial

ENSSURE



This project in Nepal emphasizes the private sector's integration into the training system to increase the relevance of skills training and competencies of job seekers and already employed workers. The project established partnerships with over 600 companies who actively contributed to work-based learning by offering two-year apprenticeships or short-term courses. Small to medium companies are assisted by instructors providing advice and support on all training aspects, notably improving the quality of work-based training. ENSSURE also provides training to associations, chambers, and companies on the development and implementation of HR and occupational health and safety plans. (Funded by SDC)

institutions, or business associations to deliver these services (see Figure 2). The approach's advantage is that the market system will continue to provide services beyond the project's end, and ideally other market actors begin to replicate this behavior (crowding in).

- 2) **MSME support and entrepreneurship:** Weak business performance of MSMEs typically hinders economic development. Crucial elements for local MSMEs are entrepreneurship, access to finance, high quality BDS for improved business and financial management, digitalization of processes, product quality, marketing, technology transfer and innovation, networking and business linkages, access

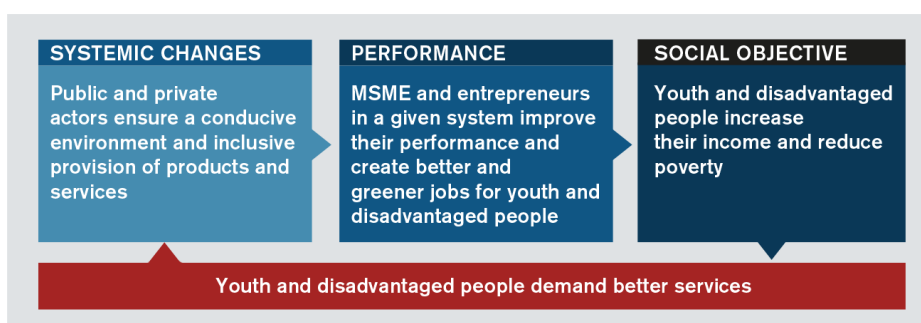



Figure 2: Theory of Change in the PSD working field

to skilled workforce and upskilling of employees, memberships in business organizations, advocacy, and mainstreaming gender and diversity. Entrepreneurs who have just started their business may need additional support, such as entrepreneurship training, business plan development, mentoring, and access to seed funding and incubators. The approach here is twofold: focusing on entrepreneurship skills through training entrepreneurs and on business services for entrepreneurs.

Chala-I



The Chala-I project implemented in Bolivia seeks to increase the living conditions of youth by addressing key issues of young entrepreneurs, such as access to business services, a conducive business environment, and access to information. The project stimulated system changes, such as the creation of an entrepreneurship agency, **ACTIVATE – SUCRE** <https://activatebolivia.org/>, which offers services to entrepreneurs, and the enactment of a law on strengthening Sucre's entrepreneurial system. Through this improved entrepreneurial ecosystem, 546 young women and men entrepreneurs have improved their living conditions, based on the access and use of services and goods offered by Sucre's entrepreneurship system.

- 3) **Financial Inclusion:** financial inclusion means that individuals, households, and businesses have access to and use affordable, formal financial services that meet their needs and that are delivered in a responsible and sustainable manner. It should always start with financial education. Financial education can be combined with skills trainings and should be a requirement for any person receiving credit. A second, often underestimated product is saving, which Helvetas encourages (e.g., through saving groups). Helvetas also supports existing local financial service providers, such as micro-finance institutes, banks or insurance companies to respond better to the needs of disadvantaged groups and make their services more inclusive and hence create a business case.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

More than half of Helvetas' partner countries are characterized by different shades of fragility or conflict

affected. The average age in fragile and conflict-affected states is 20 (compared to 33 years in the rest of the world), which leaves children and youth particularly affected by fragility. Additionally, more and more people are being displaced. In a crisis, education is often the first service to be interrupted or fully suspended. To ensure continuity in learning, Helvetas focuses on providing adapted training processes that include short-term courses, modular approaches, digital tools, while striving to strengthen local duty bearers' abilities to ensure continuity. Education and employment promotion plays a crucial role in building a better perspective for these children and youth through practical and soft skills development and access to financial services and start-up support. Micro-enterprise development and support for reconstruction is pivotal to relaunching economic activities after disasters or in protracted crises.

UP Women



The UP Women project implemented in Ethiopia applies a gender-transformative approach to empower girls and women at all levels, starting from catch-up education for girls who dropped out of school due to societal constraints, raising awareness about sexual and reproductive health, providing career guidance and life skills, training them in non-traditional jobs, supporting them in finding and retaining employment and getting a decent income, coaching them to start their own enterprise, and linking them with financial service providers. The project sensitizes system actors (i.e., public authorities, private sector, MFIs, and training providers) regarding the potential of working with women and the business case for investing in women.

GENDER TRANSFORMATION

All SJI working fields contribute to the empowerment of girls and women by promoting girls' education, including young women in skills trainings and in non-traditional jobs, and supporting female entrepreneurs and women-led businesses. To achieve gender transformation, SJI works towards changes in gender relations at the individual, household, cultural and system level. Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) is a key theme in the SJI area, focusing on women's potential as leaders, innovators, workers, entrepreneurs, producers, and consumers. A special emphasis is placed on sensitizing the private sector and family members, changing persisting gender stereotypes, and changing policies and laws to allow women to play an active role in (labor) markets.