



# Annual Report 2022

Helvetas Nepal

Helvetas Nepal has been present in Nepal since 1956, operating under an agreement with the Government of Nepal. As the largest country program of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, which operates in approximately 30 countries worldwide, Helvetas Nepal is actively engaged in implementing programs and projects across the nation. It collaborates with numerous technical and social organizations to promote sustainable development and poverty reduction at both local and national levels. The organization's ultimate goal is to empower individuals by providing them with new opportunities, skills, and resources to enhance their livelihoods.

In its endeavors, Helvetas Nepal works in partnership with local and national non-governmental organizations, private sector entities, as well as local and national government bodies. It advocates for the principles of decentralization and subsidiarity, ensuring that decisions are made at the appropriate levels and fostering accountability throughout the development process.

Detailed information on Helvetas Nepal can be accessed at <https://nepal.helvetas.org>

**Published by**

Helvetas Nepal  
Bakhundole, Lalitpur,  
GPO Box 688, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Telephone: +977 1 5424926, +977 1 5424925  
E-mail: [co.np@Helvetas.org](mailto:co.np@Helvetas.org)

Photos: Helvetas Nepal

Cover Photo: Women bridge fitters fitting walk-way steel deck in Ghurswaghat Bridge, Kanchanpur (Photo credit: TBSU/Helvetas Nepal)

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## List of Abbreviations

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CHF	Swiss Franc
CTEVT	Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training
ENSSURE	Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment Project
EVENT	Enhanced Vocational Education and Training Project
FSAP	Improving Food Security and Nutrition of Smallholder Farmers through an Agroecological Approach Project
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GRAPE	Green Resilient Agricultural Productive Ecosystems Project
InElam	Innovation in Enterprise Development and Job Creation Project
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
MRC	Migration Resource Center
MITO	Strengthening Walnut Value-chain in Nepal Project
NAMA	Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action
NPR	Nepalese Rupees
PROYEL	Promotion of Youth Engagement in Local Governance Process Project
RbF	Riverbed Farming Project
ReMi	Reintegration of Returnee Migrants Project
SaMi	Safer Migration Project
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
TA	Technical Assistance
TBSU	Trail Bridge Support Unit
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

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## Message from the Country Director

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It's my pleasure to present the annual report of Helvetas Nepal for the year 2022. It highlights the remarkable journey we have undertaken, showcasing our key achievements, the human stories that drive us and move forward.

Helvetas Nepal remained committed to the mission ensuring basic rights, creating new perspectives, and strengthening good governance. As Nepal embarks on a profound journey of governance reforms, our efforts have been aligned with this transformative agenda. Helvetas Nepal focused its interventions on issues related to water, food, climate, and trail bridges; skills, jobs, enterprises, and private sector engagement; youth, governance, and safer migration.

We are actively contributing to the process of federal state building, supporting vital political reforms in the governance landscape. Our technical assistance focuses on strengthening provincial and local governments, and fostering effective inter-governmental collaboration across three levels of governments that are truly responsive, effective and people centered. This commitment is aligned with the principles set forth in the new Constitution of Nepal, 2015.

Our partnerships, built on trust and shared values, have been the cornerstone of our success. Together with government agencies, civil society organizations, private businesses, and academia, we have pooled our collective strengths, leveraged our resources, and increased outreach and impact. Helvetas Nepal has reinforced its partnership with Alliance 2015 Members as the country lead with the initiation of a joint project, and joint emergency preparedness and response plan.

As we move forward, Helvetas Nepal will carry the spirit of partnership and innovation to continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of the communities we serve. Helvetas Nepal will increase engagement in rural-urban linkages, strengthen work with youth significantly, improve the humanitarian-development nexus, strengthen gender equality and social justice, advance climate change adaptation and mitigation, and leverage the digital transformation. Helvetas Nepal will emphasize on quality, accountability, and human resource management to further enhance our effectiveness.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Government of Nepal, our contributing donors, including SDC, EU, IFAD, charity: water, Swiss Solidarity, Happel Foundation, Symphasis Foundation and Esperanza Foundation, and our invaluable implementing partners for their steady support and collaboration. To the communities we have the privilege to serve, they are the source of inspiration for their commitment to positive change. And, to our dedicated staff members for their commitment and teamwork.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Prabin Manandhar". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a vertical yellow line.

Dr. Prabin Manandhar  
Country Director

## Country Context Update

Following the Federal and Provincial elections in 2022, Nepal is entering an extended phase of political fractures and instability. The country has been undergoing a significant shift from a unitary to a federal system of governance. The distribution of power and resources among the federal, provincial, and local governments has been a recurring challenge. The federal government still holds huge power and resources while the provincial and local governments are struggling with a lack of capacity, resources, and related laws. Accountability is still lacking in federalism and structural problems remain unaddressed, making the new political structure vulnerable. Nevertheless, federalism is seen as an opportunity to further inclusion and better service delivery in the country.

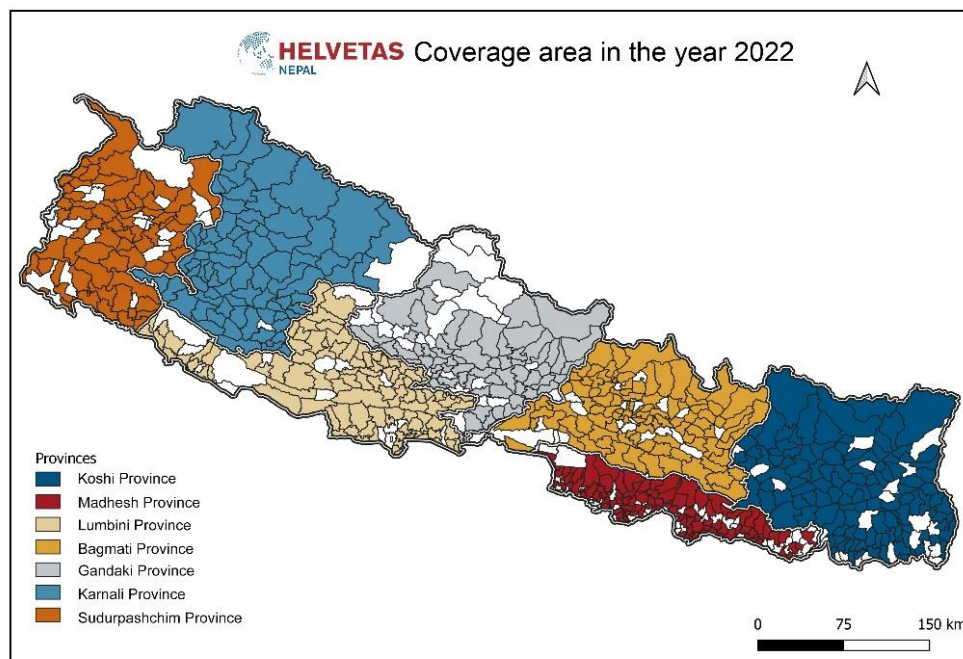
Women, young workers, and returnees from foreign employment have been the most severely affected in post-COVID Nepal. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has brought new challenges to the local economic recovery by affecting energy prices and inflation rates.

Gender equality and social inclusion remains one of the most persistent challenges facing Nepal. Interestingly, the country has elected 42 percent of youth as people's representatives at the local level. There are significant numbers of Dalit women elected at the local level. Several initiatives have been taken by the government and non-government organizations towards women and men facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination due to caste, class, ethnicity, disability, or religion.

Climate change is visibly impacting Nepal. The country is rapidly urbanizing with a projected annual urbanization rate of 6 percent. Nepal is most at risk of floods, including Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFS), landslides, droughts, and waterborne diseases. Nepal made good progress on many of the MDG targets and there are opportunities to further progress toward achieving the SDGs by 2030.

## Helvetas Nepal Country Strategy

The Country Strategy (2019-22) is aligned with the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Plan of the Government of Nepal with the vision of achieving equality and sustainability by facilitating people's access to capital and skills, minimum wages, and social security arrangements. It is guided by the Helvetas Global Strategies (2018-20 and 2021-24). It is further aligned with the Swiss Cooperation Strategy for Nepal (2018-22) which has three integrated domains of interventions - Federal State building, Employment and Income, and Migration. The overall development goal of the strategy is – All women and men in Nepal, especially those who are economically poor and socially marginalized, have dignified lives.



The goal has been pursued through eight working fields under three working areas in the forms of program implementation (people), advisory support (partnerships) and policy advocacy (frame conditions). Helvetas Nepal has integrated gender equality and social inclusion into the projects to increase the access of women and the marginalized to education and employment and reduced discriminatory and harmful practices including child marriage, caste-based discrimination, dowry witchcraft accusation and menstrual restriction. Advocacy has been addressed in the projects to improve the legal and policy environment for opening space for citizens, civil society and the private sector. On the other hand, target communities and networks have been empowered as right holders for their voice and participation in local governance.

Helvetas Nepal largely focussed its activities in Karnali and Madhesh Provinces but remained open for other provinces or municipalities for donor-funded mandates in Koshi, Bagmati and Lumbini Provinces. Helvetas Nepal has been contributing to Federal State Building and responding to COVID-19 in the project areas.

### Working Area: Water, Food and Climate

Through the working area "Water, Food and Climate", Helvetas aims to enable people to gain sustainable access to natural resources, safe water, sanitation and hygiene, nutritious and healthy food, and technical and financial support services for improved and climate-resilient living conditions in rural and urban areas. There are four working fields under this working area and Helvetas Nepal has been involved in all these working fields as described below:

#### Working Field: WASH and Water Governance

Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) is not only a prerequisite to health but also contributes to the livelihoods and dignity of the people. Helvetas improves citizens' sustainable access to safe drinking water, improved sanitation, and hygiene facilities at home, in schools and other public places through the broader Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Program. The projects under the broader IWRM Program of this working field are given in the table below:

Project name	Funding source	Duration	Helvetas role
Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Program	Public donations	2022-2025	Project Management
Rural Village Water Resource Management Project (RVWRMP)	Finnish Aid	2016 - Sept 2022	Technical Assistance
Increasing Access to WASH-21-22	charity: water	Aug 2021- Dec 2022	Project Management
Increasing Access to WASH-22-23	charity: water	Aug 2022 - Aug 2023	Project Management

A total of 45,495 people (49% women) got direct access to safe drinking water and enjoying fundamental rights to water, and sanitation enshrined in the constitution of Nepal. Of the 45,495 people, 35,450 citizens benefitted at community level (6,041 households), 9,904 students at school (64 schools) and 141 people at other public institutions through construction of 76 drinking water and sanitation schemes. The completed drinking water supply schemes have saved a significant amount of water fetching time for the people. The private tap stands in their yard are making their life easier. The people used the time saved from fetching water for various purposes: childcare, rest, cleaning the household, participation in social events, and agricultural activity.

The project's interventions have supported improved sanitation and hygiene conditions in the working areas. The local people are progressing towards realizing all the indicators of total sanitation including Household Water Treatment and Storage (HWTS). During the reporting period, 6,849 households used water filters in their households for safe drinking water; 7,989 households managed hand washing facilities in their yards; 8,225 households built a dry rack to dry kitchen utensils after washing and 7,240 households managed garbage pits for safe disposal of household solid waste in scheme areas and beyond scheme are in the same wards of the municipality.

Moreover, among 76 drinking water schemes 20 schemes were developed as a multiple-use system and provided irrigation facilities mainly for kitchen gardens on about 16.9 hectares of land. The

projects also supported enhancing the local capacity to better plan, implement, operate and sustain the WASH facilities during the reporting period. A total of 1,273 people were trained on water supply: 1,744 on sanitation and 268 multiple use systems and climate-resilient WASH.

Helvetas Nepal collaborates with other organizations for advocacy to address contemporary WASH issues in the country. It has been actively involved in Agenda for Change (A4C), a collaboration of like-minded organizations, which advocate for and works to strengthen the WASH system. This year, the A4C Country Collaboration in Nepal conducted research entitled "WASH System Research: Identify the Strength and Capacity Gaps of Different Building Blocks at Local Government Level in Nepal".

The WASH and Water Governance projects had a budget that represented 22.77% of the total country program budget this year, and the expenditure was 24.45% of the same budget.

### **Case Story: A returnee migrant worker lives a better life working as a mason.**

Many Nepali youths aspire to find better job opportunities abroad, but often their dreams are shattered, leading to distress upon their return. Agra Bahadur Bohara, 37, from Lalu, Naraharinath Municipality-9 in Kalikot district, is one such migrant worker who faced this reality.

After quitting school following 8th grade, Agra worked on his family's farm, yielding enough grain for consumption but insufficient surplus for cash. In 2014, he worked in a harsh Malaysian furniture factory for two years, falling ill and spending his earnings on medical treatment. Returning home in 2016 with no funds, he spent around NPR 200,000 (approx. CHF 1420) on medical expenses.

Back in his village, Agra used skills gained in Malaysia to open a furniture shop. Helvetas Nepal initiated the Ranirada drinking water supply scheme in 2020, in which he became secretary of the users' committee and took part in its construction, along with VMW training. Subsequently, he participated in a 15-day mason training, significantly boosting his confidence and skills. As a local "Mistri" mason, he contributed to nine water supply schemes, earning around NPR 500,000 (approx. CHF 3550) since 2020.

Agra's monthly earnings now come from his furniture, agricultural businesses, and masonry work, totalling about NPR 30,000 (approx. CHF 215). Content in his village with his family, he believes domestic work is superior to his bitter foreign experience. He's ready for upcoming schemes by Helvetas Nepal in 2023, aiming for more consistent Mistri work, potentially earning up to NPR 40,000 (approx. CHF 285) per month. This is crucial as his son requires expensive medical treatment.



Agra with his toolbox

Photo Credit: IWRMP

### **Working Field: Food and Nutrition**

Helvetas attempts to build partnerships among public, civic and private actors to enhance their competencies to secure access to land, sustainable agriculture practices, food systems, services, and markets and advocate for enabling policy frameworks to increase the availability of affordable, nutritious and healthy food for disadvantaged people. The projects in this field are as follows:



<b>Project name</b>	<b>Funding source</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Helvetas role</b>
<i>Strengthening Walnut Value Chain in Nepal (MITO) Project</i>	<i>Public donations, Happel Foundation</i>	<i>2021–2025 (Phase-II)</i>	<i>Project Management</i>
<i>Riverbed Farming (RbF) Project</i>	<i>Public donations</i>	<i>2019–2022</i>	<i>Project Management</i>
<i>Improving Food Security and Nutrition of Smallholder Farmers through an Agroecological Approach (FSAP)</i>	<i>Public donations, Fastenaktion</i>	<i>Sep 2022–December 2024</i>	<i>Project Management</i>
<i>Green Resilient Agricultural Productive Ecosystems (GRAPE)</i>	<i>European Union, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)</i>	<i>Sep 2022–November 2024</i>	<i>Project Management</i>

*(Italics indicate projects straddling two or more working fields)*

During this fiscal year, four projects namely MITO, RbF, FSAP and GRAPE are implementing the program that is contributing to outcome-2 (Food and Nutrition). The projects under this outcome continued collaboration with local governments, civil society organizations and private sectors. They contribute to strengthening localized agriculture extension systems, technical assistance, and strengthening agro-based enterprises promoting climate-friendly, agro-ecology responsive and water-efficient technologies to improve income and sustainable food production of resource-poor and most disadvantaged communities. The projects collectively considered innovations that promoted comprehensive local agricultural advisory services systems and market systems development as key elements of their core working areas.

In 2022, the projects collaborated with 27 municipalities of Madhesh and Karnali provinces thereby reaching 8161 farming households (57% women and 77% disadvantaged groups) and practicing sustainable agricultural practices. Altogether 3428 farming households (55% women) gained additional income through market-oriented production and sustainable market linkages. A total of 2057 group members were trained on improved agricultural technologies, nursery entrepreneurship and leadership development.

In brief, the MITO walnut project aims to strengthen the walnut value chain and benefit 801 walnut producers. The project capacitated nine entrepreneurs and they were able to graft 29700 soft-shelled walnuts with an 81% success rate. Riverbed Farming Project in close collaboration with the local government supported 6358 farming households for the adoption of riverbed farming technology by cultivating 924 hectares of dry riverbed land. The GRAPE project has been focusing to strengthen the capacity of local government stakeholders, conduct action research and produce knowledge products and disseminate climate-smart, water-efficient production and marketing approaches. The GRAPE project has just been started and initiated basic orientation on the value chain, market study, coordination with local government and initially engaged 500 households (65% women) from two municipalities of Humla district. Similarly, the FSAP project has aimed to support smallholder farmers especially women and Dalits to improve their food security and nutrition by adopting agroecological and climate-resilient approaches to increase sustainable food production (neglected nutritious crops/vegetables, fruits and livestock). The project is implemented in two municipalities of Kalikot and Jajarkot and engaged 502 households (100% women and 51% Dalit).

In total Food and Nutrition projects collaborated with the concerned municipalities in Madhesh and Karnali provinces with the incorporation of relevant project activities in their local plans with fund provisions. These projects sensitized local governments on improved land (public/lease) access to resource-poor farmers, supported crop-specific associations and created a multi-stakeholder platform to upgrade the policies, particularly on banana incorporation in a crop insurance policy, development of walnut nursery guidelines at the local level.

This year Food and Nutrition projects represented 2.72% of the total country program budget and 2.77% of the expenditure.

## Case story: How a processing center revolutionized walnut oil production and changed lives in a small village in Jumla, Nepal

Bimala Khatri, 27, hailing from Tatopani-4 Jumla, always aimed to uplift her village. Witnessing the struggles faced by local women, especially with laborious traditional walnut oil extraction, she sought change.

Upon hearing about Swiss individuals from Helvetas focusing on walnut oil, she attended their meeting to share the difficulties. Acknowledging rural women's challenges, the Swiss team collaborated with MiTO walnut project to design a cycle-based oil extraction machine. Supported by the local municipality, a processing center emerged.

This center transformed walnut oil production, replacing time-consuming methods with efficient ones. Increased oil yield led to improved income and living standards.

Bimala takes pride in the center's success, elevating women's lives. Better oil quality and quantity raised product value, permitting higher market prices and freeing time for other tasks. Acknowledged

by local and provincial authorities, the center's model spread, creating jobs and enhancing village life. Empowering women economically, it enabled contributions to family income, better education, and healthcare. This stands as an exemplary instance of how modest changes yield significant positive impact on communities.



Bimala extracting walnut kernel using a needle



Installation of walnut crushing machine  
Photos Credit: Pramod Bhari, MITO

## Working Field: Climate and Disaster Resilience

Nepal is one of the most vulnerable countries to disasters owing to its fragile geological condition, intense and diverse climatic system, steep topography and geographical remoteness. This has been further exacerbated due to the impacts of climate change. The poor and disadvantaged communities are affected most owing to their weak adaptation capacity. In the absence of dedicated projects on climate and disaster resilience working field, Helvetas Nepal focused its support to improve the resilience of the poor and disadvantaged through its sectoral projects. Helvetas attempts to foster partnership among public, civic and private actors to enhance their competencies to strengthen the resilience of disadvantaged people to climate change and disaster risks in rural and urban areas by supporting long-term planning, sustainable ecosystems management, risk-informed decision-making and improved access to climate finance.

The projects in this working field are as follows:

Project name	Funding source	Duration	Helvetas role
<i>Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Program</i>	<i>Public donations</i>	<i>2017-June 2021</i>	<i>Project Management</i>
<i>Riverbed Farming (RbF) Project</i>	<i>Public donations</i>	<i>2019–2022</i>	<i>Project Management</i>
<i>MITO (Strengthening Walnut Value Chain in Nepal)</i>	<i>Public donations, Happel Foundation</i>	<i>2021 – Dec 2025 (Phase-II)</i>	<i>Project Management</i>
<i>Improving Food Security and Nutrition of Smallholder Farmers through an Agroecological Approach (FSAP)</i>	<i>Public donations, Fastenaktion</i>	<i>Sep 2022– December 2024</i>	<i>Project Management</i>
<i>Green Resilient Agricultural Productive Ecosystems (GRAPE)</i>	<i>European Union, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, and BMZ, implementation by GIZ</i>	<i>Sep 2022– November 2024</i>	<i>Project Management</i>

*(Italics indicate projects straddling two or more working fields)*

To contribute to making the WASH sector climate resilient, it supported three municipalities in formulating Water Use Master Plans which considered the climate risks and their impacts while assessing the water sources and their potential uses. spring shed management activities were implemented in 17 drinking water schemes, reviving and augmenting the water yield of the sources and 20 multiple-use systems were implemented facilitating the use of excess water for kitchen gardening. The capacity of 243 beneficiaries was enhanced on retention, recharge, and reuse of water. 10,144 students from 64 schools were trained on climate change and the productive use of water through the blue school approach. Helvetas Nepal supported poor and vulnerable people living along the river in bamboo cultivation intercropped with moringa on 26 hectares of fallow riverbanks and provided training on producing high-value bamboo products. This not only improved the soil binding thus reducing the risk of bank cutting by the floods but also enhanced the adaptation capacity of poor and vulnerable people. Similarly, it also supported private sector entrepreneurs producing organic fertilizer using cattle dung, livestock bones, etc. at a commercial scale in Karnali. It has also been engaged with farmers in enhancing their awareness of the benefits of biofertilizers. A pilot on biofertilizer at the scale of micro-enterprise is under implementation in Madhesh Province.

Helvetas Nepal has capacitated 52 municipal representatives and relevant staff (8 women) in key policy aspects of sustainable, climate resilient and business-oriented development. It has continued training the walnut farmers for sustainable harvesting from the forest, composting, mulching, and botanical pesticides, and the nursery entrepreneurs on producing resilient rootstocks/scion.

Helvetas Nepal's engagement is relatively less in disaster resilience. Some projects like TBSU and IWRMP consider disaster risk in the design of trail bridges and drinking water infrastructures. In 2023, Helvetas Nepal intends to develop communication materials capitalizing on its past and current experience and disseminate them. It will continue building stakeholder partnerships and networking. With a dedicated climate change fund from the head office, it will pilot a small but impactful intervention on improving the climate resilience of poor and vulnerable people.

## Working Field: Bridges and Roads

Improving access to economic opportunities and public services by building trail bridges and rural roads is a core component of Helvetas' strategy. Helvetas aims that the population, in particular disadvantaged women and men, has increased access to markets, schools, health centers and other public services because of newly built and well-maintained trail bridges, rural roads and tracks. The projects in this working field are as follows:

Project name	Funding source	Duration	Helvetas role
Trail Bridge Support Unit (TBSU); Trail Bridge Sub-Sector Program	SDC and GoN	2019 – July 2023	Advisory
South-South Cooperation Unit	Various	2016-Dec 2021	Project Management

In its penultimate year, the Trail Bridge Support Unit (TBSU) has focused on boosting stakeholder capacities in preparation for the Swiss Technical Assistance (TA) exit from the Trail Bridge Sub-Sector Program (TBSSP) in 2023.

This included enhancing the abilities of Provincial Technical Assistance Providers (PTAP), TBSU's provincial extension. Efforts began to hand over warehouses for wire ropes and bulldog grips to provincial governments. Six out of seven provinces allocated space and were identifying focal persons for management. Monitoring systems, managed by TBSU, were updated for transfer to PTAPs and government officials. The Department of Local Infrastructure (DoLI) initiated steps to transfer servers to the government's National Information Technical Center.

Government staff received training, with 138 Engineers, 79 Sub-Engineers, and 18 Assistant Sub-Engineers trained. Partner NGO staff, crucial for the community approach to bridge building, were also trained. Traineeships for Engineers (21) and Sub-Engineers (38) were initiated, along with on-the-job training for 20 Assistant Sub-Engineers.

In terms of outputs, Swiss TA completed 425 new trail bridges and major maintenance on 10 more. Over 717,000 people, with 52% from disadvantaged groups, benefited directly from these bridges. The bridges saved travel time and supported daily tasks and school attendance, particularly benefiting women and children.

Bridge construction generated over 1 million person-days of employment, with 66% benefiting disadvantaged groups. Users' Committees formed were representative of beneficiary populations, with 49% women's representation.

Regarding south-south collaboration, SSCU assisted Ethiopia's Transforming Rural Access for Improvement Livelihood (TRAIL) project, training engineers and providing on-site coaching. Lessons learned and plans for the final year include continuous engagement with provincial governments, coordinating PTAP management, and facilitating coordination through Trail Bridge Coordination Committee Meetings.

Bridges and Roads projects accounted for 21.48% of the country program budget, with corresponding expenditure of 24.53%.

### **Case story: Pattharbojhi Ghat trail bridge ends a nightmare for locals.**

The Orahi Nala river in Madhuban Municipality, Bardiya, Lumbini Province has been the site of unfortunate incidents involving people being swept away and drowning. In 2004, a man and his motorcycle were lost when their boat capsized, and more recently, three individuals (two women and one man) lost their lives while attempting to swim across the river due to the absence of a safe crossing. The river's challenges affected the 416 households residing there, with the majority being Madheshi Janajati (51%), followed by Dalits (30%), and the rest belonging to Brahmin/Thakuri communities.

Before the construction of the Pattharbojhi trail bridge, locals faced difficulties during the rainy season, unable to cross the river and compelled to take a lengthy detour to reach the nearest permanent bridge. This hindered students from attending classes, leading to poor education quality for many due to months of absence. Health emergencies were dire, resulting in premature deaths due to delayed access to treatment. Goods transportation was also costly, either via boats or longer routes.

The Pattharbojhi Ghat trail bridge project began in 2015 and was finished in 2019, costing NPR 8.7 million (approx. CHF 71,770). The bridge has significantly improved daily life. Around 100 students use it to reach school, boosting attendance and eliminating room rental expenses. Locals utilize motorcycles and auto-rickshaws for travel and goods transport, with about 70 motorcycles and 4 auto-rickshaws crossing daily. Regular market access has spurred agricultural and business investments.



Women transporting grains on bicycles by wading across the Orahi Nala before the construction of the trail bridge



Women crossing the Pattharbojhi trail bridge safely and easily after the construction of the trail bridge

Photo Credit: Surya Narayan Chaudhary, Technical Officer, SEBAC Nepal

Local success stories include Asharam Chaudhary, earning NPR 20,000 (approx. CHF 140) monthly from cereal crop sales, and Raju Chaudhary, earning NPR 40,000 (approx. CHF 280) from his furniture shop, serving people across the river. The community values the bridge's benefits, prompting the municipality to allocate NPR 500,000 (approx. CHF 3550) for gabion protection work, safeguarding both the settlement and the bridge from river waters.

### Working Area: Voice, Inclusion and Cohesion

Engaging in the working area "Voice, Inclusion and Cohesion", Helvetas attempts to promote partnership with public and private actors to amplify the voices of local communities and to enhance the space for civil society and private sector actors to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes while developing capacities of public institutions to deliver socially inclusive and gender-responsive services and articulate transformative policies. This is expected to reduce inequalities, enhance social cohesion, promote human rights and promote safe and productive migration. There are three working fields under this working area and Helvetas Nepal has been involved in all these working fields, except Conflict Transformation", as described below:

### Working Field: Governance and Civic Space

The working field of Governance & Civic Space aims to empower communities and engage in political decision-making, strengthen human rights and claim access to quality public services, while government and civil society partners have increased capacity and mutual trust to articulate policies that improve frame conditions for effective decentralized governance, as well as an expanded civic space and enabling environment for civil society. The dedicated projects in this working field are as follows:

Project name	Funding source	Phase until	Helvetas role
Promotion of Youth Engagement in Local Governance Process (PROYEL)	European Union	Jan.2022-March 2025	Project Management
Good Governance and GESI (Triple G)	Public donations	Apr.2021- Dec 2024	Project Management

Almost all projects of Helvetas Nepal have either been designed or have adjusted their working approach to engaging formally with sub-national governments, both local and provincial ones, in project implementation. Apart from the above-mentioned dedicated projects, many sectoral projects (e.g., TBSU, IWRMP, RbF, ENSSURE, SaMi, ReMi, etc.) also contributed to this working field but are reported under their specific sections. A new project, known as the Promotion of Youth Engagement in Local Governance Process (PROYEL) Project, has been implemented in eight selected municipalities of Karnali and Madhesh Provinces. The project is to promote the engagement of youth in the democratic and governance process and the protection, promotion and fulfillment of human

rights. Because of the co-financing requirement in PROYEL, Good Governance and GESI (Triple G) Project has been embedded in the former from the beginning of 2022. Additionally, the Triple G Project fund has also been utilized for co-financing a project entitled "Strengthening Governance for Development and Social Justice of Dalit Women" implemented by the Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO). The project, principally financed by Bread for the World, is implemented in four municipalities of Madhesh, Gandaki and Sudur Paschim provinces.

In the year 2022, all local governments a collaboration with one or several Helvetas projects. But only 13 local governments could be supported to formulate their plans primarily water use master plans and to include youth engagement aspects in their plans. Similarly, several events of orientation on governance-related topics could be organized which 1639 individuals (54% women, 26% Disadvantaged groups) attended. A session on Federal State Building was conducted in Koshi, Karnali and Madhesh provinces on different dates. Throughout the year, collaboration and links with local governments and concerned stakeholders have been smooth. After the elections held in 2022, there is a need to invest greater effort in building relationships for meaningful collaboration and coordination with the new elects of both local and provincial governments. It has been observed that the sub-national governments' interests and engagement are noteworthy if on board in a timely manner by recognizing their roles.

Although the number of civil society organizations supported by different projects reached 346, 71 CSOs have been able to integrate safer migration issues in their plans and eight youth panels could be supported in their advocacy activities. The public audit practice which includes a public hearing, public review and public audit has become a common norm among all infrastructure-related projects. As such, 13 different projects have put some project-specific accountability mechanisms into practice. In 2022, the Helvetas Nepal Grievance Redressal portal has been launched to ensure project stakeholders have a platform to raise concerns/complaints and to provide feedback on project activities.

This year Governance and Civic Space projects represented 2.73% of the total country program budget and 2.22% of the expenditure.

### Case story: Empowering youth to influence local governments.

PROYEL empowers youth as change-makers by establishing, strengthening, and operating Youth Panels. These panels offer an institutional space and collaborative platform for local youths to engage with their governments. Led by coordinators, these panels include diverse youth representatives who hold dialogues with local governments on governance, development, and youth issues. Creating such panels is vital to amplify the youth voice.



Ramesh Budhathoki, Mayor of Hariwon Municipality interacting with youth panel members in a youth Palika dialogue session  
Photo Credit: Nirma Chaudhary, SSN

Richa Singh Danuwar, 24, a national Kabbadi player and Youth Panel Coordinator in Kshireshwornath Municipality of Dhanusha, realized the significance of engaging with local government through workshops. She now raises awareness among youth and mobilizes them for municipal activities.

Gayatri Pariyar, a Dalit girl from Hariwon Municipality, Sarlahi, felt excluded from municipal activities until a Lalbandi workshop enlightened her about federalism, rights, duties, and ways to engage with local government.

Ankit Chaudhary, Coordinator of the Youth Panel in Barahathawa Municipality, Sarlahi, successfully influenced the inclusion of youth entrepreneurship and skill development programs in the annual budget, demonstrating the impact of such panels on local governance.

Helvetas Nepal has been carrying out various levels of training and orientations to youth panels on federalism, constitution, local governance process and relevant acts of governance are some such activities. Attending such programs, around 90 youths from Madhesh province like Danuwar, Pariyar, and Chaudhary, have come to know that the municipal and provincial governments have the responsibility to launch various schemes including employment-generating entrepreneurship programs for youths.

Not only youth, but local representatives are also equally encouraged. Kalpana Kumari Katuwal, the Mayor of Barahathawa Municipality, Sarlahi, says, *“Equipping youths with legal and constitutional provisions is a basic way to increase youth engagement at a local level”*.

*“As a mayor, I have been focusing on programs to retain the youth in the municipality. For this, I need to engage youth in our municipality’s processes like budgeting, program and plan making and implementation. As youths are migrating on a large scale, we have been facing a dearth of human resources required for the development,”* says Ramesh Budhathoki, Mayor of Hariwon Municipality of Sarlahi District of Madhesh Province.

## Working Field: Migration

Migration-related interventions of Helvetas Nepal contribute to the Helvetas strategy for strengthening the capacities of government and non-government institutions to deliver inclusive services and to articulate transformative policies to reduce inequalities, enhance social cohesion, and ensure safe and productive migration and reintegration, including support to improve migration governance systems to protect the rights and wellbeing of potential and returnee migrants and their families through the following projects:

Project name	Funding source	Duration	Helvetas role
Safer Migration (SaMi)	SDC and GoN	2018 -July 2024	Technical Assistance
Reintegration of Returnee Migrant Workers (ReMi)	SDC	July 2022-July 2026	Technical Assistance
<i>Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment (ENSSURE)</i>	<i>SDC and GoN</i>	<i>Sep 2021 - July 2025</i>	<i>Advisory</i>
<i>SAMRIDDHI</i>	<i>IFAD</i>	<i>2018 – Dec 2022</i>	<i>Advisory</i>

*(Italics indicate projects straddling two or more working fields)*

The stabilization of COVID-19 has increased the number of people opting for jobs abroad, while also resulting in the regular operation of ongoing programs. A total of 297,874 individuals (75,951 women) were reached through MRCs; 1,630 (223 women) potential migrants received vocational skill training; 3,320 individuals (3,010 women) received psychosocial counseling services (with 65% showing signs of improved well-being); 18,680 people benefited from financial literacy program; and 7,332 (9% women) victims of migration received legal/paralegal support. This year the program brought together CDOs and the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) to explore strategies for increased case resolution ratio, which also resulted in an agreement to develop 'FE-related cases mediation and referral guidelines for CDOs'. Due to continued collaboration with local governments (LGs), 93 LGs allocated budgets (NPR 47,142,000) (appx. CHF 334,700) to carry out migration-related programs, 70 LGs developed safer migration guidelines, 10 LGs included migration issues in their periodic plan and 65 LGs prepared their migration profile with SaMi facilitation. Similarly, one LG is running MRC

and four LGs running sub-MRCs with their own resources, reflecting the gradual internalization of the SaMi program by LGs. SaMi has supported concerned province ministries to exercise their responsibilities in relation to safer migration, particularly in developing their labor and employment policy. All the program components prioritize disadvantaged beneficiaries including women and Dalits.

The two rounds of elections had implications for achieving the set outcome. The majority of elected representatives were new to the program and some of them are still in the process of hiring SaMi program staff. Therefore, SaMi had to develop its understanding of migration themes and build the capacities of a program implementation team. Since the elected representatives are in place for five years, a smooth implementation can be predicted for next year and beyond.

Most efforts on the ReMi project, currently in the inception stage, have focused on project and office set-up (staff recruitment, LG selection, etc). The first Project Advisory and Coordination Committee (PACC) meeting was held in September 2022, followed by interaction events between respective Federal and Province Government (FG & PG) ministries. Organizing of Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings in two provinces was delayed due to provincial elections in November 2022, and the absence of ministers to chair these meetings. This has delayed the LG selection process, which is meant to be decided in collaboration with the PSC and SDC. However, 38 potential LGs have submitted letters expressing their interest and (monetary and in-kind) commitment to the project – of which 20 LGs will be selected. Draft Project Implementation Guidelines and Yearly Plans of Operation (2022/2023) were also developed in coordination with FG and PG counterparts, pending approval from PACC. A significant point of progress on the project is the recognition of the role of the respective PG line Ministries (for LG selection and decision-making) by both MoLESS and potential LGs – promoting inter-governmental collaboration in the spirit of Federalism in Nepal.

In the country program budget for 2022, Migration projects received an allocation of 23.93% of the total budget and the corresponding expenditure was 21.98%.

### Case story: False promises by the recruitment agency

Mangal Singh Tamang, a 28-year-old from Gangajamuna Rural Municipality, Dhading, was assured of a work visa to Greece by a recruitment agency (RA). However, he was left stranded in Turkey for over six months and never reached his destination.

Mangal paid an amount of NPR 6,45,000 (appx. CHF 4,580) to a RA with the hope of getting a job in Greece. He was excited about going for foreign employment and only found out at the last hour that he would be traveling to Turkey instead. "I was handed an individual labor permit to Turkey, instead of Greece, just before I was about to leave the country," he said. Initially, he was promised a job in the agriculture sector in Greece. The RA informed him that even though the country was different, he would still get the same job and a monthly salary of NPR 90,000 (appx. CHF 640).

Mangal had already paid the recruitment fee and since it was almost the date of his departure, he decided to trust the RA. Only upon reaching Turkey in August 2021, he found out that he was completely deceived. Let alone the agreed payment, he did not get any job at all. He had to spend six months and 21 days in Turkey. Although the RA paid for his food and accommodation, his dream of foreign employment went into vain.

His elder sister knew the RA, so his family approached the office and asked to rescue Mangal as well as refund the recruitment fees. The RA handed over a fake cheque to the family members and did not make any effort to rescue



MRC counsellor of Dhading providing information to the visitors  
Photo Credit: SaMi



him. The family managed the money on their own and rescued Mangal with the help of the embassy in March 2022.

Later, Mangal's sister met one of the program officers of SaMi who informed her about the Migrant Resource Center (MRC). After learning about the MRC and its work, she along with her brother went to the MRC, Dhading, where Mangal's case was registered. The case details were then forwarded to People Forum, one of the national partners of SaMi that facilitates access to justice. They registered the case against the RA at the Department of Foreign Employment. They also continuously followed up on the case due to which the RA returned NPR 3,30,000 (appx. CHF 2345) at first. After a rigorous follow-up from the People Forum, Mangal was able to receive the remaining amount.

### **Working Area: Skills, Jobs and Income**

As access to basic education, vocational training, and income-generating opportunities is essential to lift communities out of poverty, Helvetas has long been engaging in the working area to create gainful employment and income opportunities for the poor. Except for the working field "Basic Education", Helvetas Nepal is active in all working fields as described below:

### **Working Field: Vocational Skills**

The high youth unemployment rate is a major development challenge in Nepal. Helvetas Nepal has been working to improve the employability of the youths, especially those from disadvantaged groups, in the domestic and foreign labor market through market-led and inclusive Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). The federal government, provincial government (PGs) and local governments (LGs) implement the projects whereas Helvetas Nepal provides technical backstopping and capacity-building support to the three tiers of government to implement and institutionalize the vocational training promoted through projects. The projects in this working field are as follows:

<b>Project name</b>	<b>Funding source</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Helvetas role</b>
Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment (ENSSURE)	SDC and GoN	July 2016 – July 2023	Advisory
Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment (ENSSURE) -II	SDC and GoN	Sep 2021 - July 2025	Advisory
SAMRIDDHI	IFAD	2018 – Dec 2022	Advisory
Enhanced Vocational Education and Training (EVENT) – Phase II	SDC's contribution to the World Bank project	2020 – July 2022	Advisory (M&E)
<i>Safer Migration (SaMi)</i>	<i>SDC and GoN</i>	<i>2018- July 2022</i>	<i>Advisory</i>

*(Italics indicate projects straddling two or more working fields)*

Youths receive formal curricular trainings, a 24-month-long Dual VET apprenticeship (APT) and 10-month long On the job training (OJT) on the occupations in high demand in the market from ENSSURE Project. Aspirant migrants receive 1- month long center-based training on skills on demand at destination countries from Sami. Likewise, 390 hrs long Vocational Skill Training and 900 hrs. long Leading to Apprenticeship Model (LAM) trainings from SAMRIDDHI enable the youths to get employment and enable them to set up their own enterprises.

The projects prioritized women-friendly occupations and skills, conducted extensive outreach activities, and provided additional support to ensure women and Disadvantaged groups (DAG) participation and retention in the trainings. This year, 17,306 individuals attended a range of vocational trainings. Out of these trainees, 41% were women and 84% were from disadvantaged groups. Because of the high dropout rate (eg. 13% in OJT and 35% in APT of ENSSURE Project), the number of trainees who successfully completed vocational skill training is 11,857 (50% women and 89% disadvantaged group). Out of these training graduates, 3,209 (51% women and 87% disadvantaged group) have found additional self-employment whereas 7243 (52% women and 90% disadvantaged group) have found wage employment thanks to the training provided. In the case of ENSSURE, 62% of the employed graduates are employed in the country, 12% are in foreign employment and 24% have set up their own enterprises. Additionally, 6,967 young students (44% girls) have received career guidance services

which are supposed to help them to make career choices based on their interests and capacity. Reducing the dropout rate and increasing the pass rate has been a major challenge.

The provincial and local governments have developed a better understanding of their constitutional mandates regarding TVET function while delivering the project activities. They have also realized the importance of inter-government collaboration for the effective delivery of the TVET function. The province governments have started providing necessary guidance and mentoring support to local governments. Likewise, the local governments have started looking up to the provincial governments for guidance. In 2022, these governments have allocated NPR 12.6 million (appx. CHF 89,500) for apprenticeship and career guidance services. CTEVT, a federal institution, has become more willing to transfer TVET knowledge to the provincial and local governments. Municipalities have also started a horizontal collaboration for delivering the project activities, most notably in organizing the career fair. Similarly, provincial and local governments have recognized the importance of private sector engagement in TVET and have started engaging the private sector in the training cycle.

Private sectors like industries and their associations have been facilitated to actively engage in the whole training cycle, from developing skills standards to employing the training graduates. In 2022, ENSSURE Project signed a formal partnership agreement with three industry associations in three provinces for the promotion of apprenticeships and these partner industries invested NPR 50 million (appx. CHF 355,000) as a stipend to apprentices.

This year, the projects under Vocational Skills working field represented 25.59% of the total country program budget and 28.09% of the expenditure.

### Case story: Saphal – Success through apprenticeship

Saphar Gyawali, 22, from Sainamaina Municipality 6, Bharatpur, Rupandehi had completed his +2 when he heard about the training through his younger brother who was also a participant in Dual VET-Apprenticeship Electrical Engineering Course in the Korea Nepal Polytechnic Institute (KNPI), Tamnagar, Butwal. He chose to study the 24-month pre-Diploma level course in Mechanical Engineering at the same institute, as he was interested in the subject. Nine months after completing the course, he established his workshop in Mainabagar Auto Village, Butwal. He is now employing other apprentices in his workshop.

Saphal comes from a family of five. He has his parents and his two younger brothers. His parents depend on livestock as their main source of income. He was a hard-working apprentice during his training period. He feels that the training was very good, and he is satisfied with the training and training instructors. He did his workplace-based learning at Dhaulagiri Auto Industries Pvt. Ltd. Where he earned NPR 4,000 (appx. CHF 30) during the first two months, which was increased to NPR 8,000 (appx. CHF 57) in the third month. Upon completion of one year, it was raised again to NPR 10,000 (appx. CHF 71).



Saphal working in his workshop

Photo Credit: ENSSURE

When he completed the Dual VET-Apprenticeship course, he went to Pokhara for employment and worked in Bijaya Engineering for nine months. He got a starting salary of NPR 22,000, (appx. CHF 155), which was increased to NPR 30,000 (appx. CHF 215). After nine months, he returned to Butwal and established his own workshop, Success Engineering Workshop with a total investment of NPR 75,00,000 (appx. CHF 53,500). He had to take a loan of NPR 60,00,000 (appx. CHF 42,600) from a bank while he invested NPR 15,00,000 (appx. CHF 10,600) on his own. Initially, he would earn only NPR 1,500.00 to NPR 2,000.00 per month. After nine months now, he has a monthly income of NPR

100,000.00 to NPR 150,000(appx. CHF 710 to 1050). He has even hired two workers in his workshop. He pays one worker a monthly salary of NPR 40,000. (Appx. CHF 285) and another monthly of NPR 20,000. (Appx. CHF 145). He provides service of serving and maintenance of all types of heavy vehicles, manufacturing of canvar machine, feather removing machine and so on.

### Working Field: Private Sector Development

Helvetas attempts to create multiple partnerships and promotes policies that build sustainable business environments and foster inclusive economies that support decent job creation and entrepreneurship in micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, in farm and non-farm sectors. The projects in this working field are as described below:

Project name	Funding source	Phase until	Helvetas role
InElam	Public donations	2017- Dec 2020	Advisory
<i>Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment (ENSSURE) Phase II</i>	SDC and GoN	2021 - July 2025	Advisory
SAMRIDDHI	IFAD	2018 – Dec 2022	Advisory

*(Italics indicate projects straddling two or more working fields)*

In 2022, Helvetas Nepal continued to prioritize private sector development as a key driver of economic growth and poverty reduction. Helvetas Nepal focused on enterprise development, skills, and migration-related projects such as InElam, SAMRIDDHI, ENSSURE, SaMi, and ReMi, to support the development of micro and small-sized enterprises, strengthen business environments, encourage responsible business practices, facilitate market linkages, and foster innovation and entrepreneurship for private sector development. Through these projects, Helvetas Nepal aimed to create a more conducive business environment for private sector investment and growth in Nepal. Helvetas Nepal's efforts were focused on five key areas, including supporting SMEs, strengthening business environments, encouraging responsible business practices, facilitating market linkages, and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.

Helvetas Nepal's achievements in each of these areas are detailed in the report of respective projects. Notable successes include the establishment of 407 new business out of which 61% is started by women through InElam, providing financial literacy classes to over 18,000 individuals through SaMi, and signing a partnership agreement with three industry associations to promote a dual Vocational Education and Training apprenticeship program through ENSSURE and SAMRIDDHI projects.

Project of Helvetas Nepal also facilitated policy advocacy and innovation in partnership with the private sector through initiatives such as the development of technologies related to walnut grafting and attractive packaging materials through the MITO Walnut Project and strengthening policies and rules for promoting private sector investment and development through the InElam Project at the local level in different value chains such as banana insurance policy, Mentha farming dragon-fruits, etc.

Partnerships with private sector organizations were also successful through its different projects, with 16 private sector organizations partnering with the SaMi project, and the MITO Walnut Project facilitating a trade agreement between 10 local traders and 10 producer's representatives, as well as MoU between a national trader and a local trader, and a walnut oil processor for market linkage.

Overall, Helvetas Nepal's efforts in private sector development have been successful in promoting entrepreneurship, improving access to finance, imparting vocational skills in partnership with privately led training providers and business associations, and facilitating policy advocacy and innovation in partnership with the private sector for job creation and economic development. Through its work, the organization aimed to create a more conducive business environment for private sector investment and growth in 2022.

The allocation for "Private Sector Development" projects in the annual country program budget accounted for 0.39% of the total budget, with the corresponding expenditure of 0.49%.

## Case story: Role of Private Sector in Systemic Upscaling of Organic Fertilizer

Nepali farmers grapple with fertilizer shortages due to global price hikes and government import cuts. This scarcity risks reduced agricultural output and increased farmer poverty. Shifting to organic fertilizers could help but requires careful planning. The private sector, like Karnali Bio Energy and Organic Fertilizer Pvt. Ltd., can offer high-quality organic fertilizers to support sustainable agriculture.



Workers packing biofertilizer pellets in sacs  
Photos Credit: Tek Bahadur Singh, InElam



A heap of biofertilizer pellets

Formed in 2020, this group of four youth grew up in farming families, witnessing the harm of excessive chemical use. They researched Indian technologies, discovering granular organic fertilizer that's easy to store, apply, and transport. These pellets gradually release nutrients, enhancing productivity without harming soil quality. Using materials like sawdust, mustard cake, and animal waste, their approach is environmentally friendly.

Despite challenges, Karnali Bio Energy scaled up with Helvetas' InElam project, raising production and farmer awareness. They collaborate with local governments, ensuring quality exceeding standards and seeking organic certification. Private initiatives like theirs promote sustainable agriculture, prevent soil degradation, and create local jobs.

## Gender and Social Equity

Gender and social equity (GSE) remained the priority transversal theme of Helvetas Nepal in all its working areas in 2022. The projects are GSE significant at operational and programmatic levels; sensitive towards gender and social inequalities and responding to practical needs and strategic interests, thereby including largely women and disadvantaged groups (DAG). Institutionally, Helvetas Nepal is GSE-sensitive fulfilling a few of the milestones of the GSE marker. However, in workforce diversity, it is yet to reach to GSE sensitive range (28% women employees, 2022).

One of the approaches adopted for GSE is to encourage women and DAGs in decision-making regarding the construction and use of public resources such as bridges and water facilities. This has materialized through the inclusion of women and DAG in user committees and other key positions. For example, in TBSU, 97% of Users' Committees are proportionately representative of the beneficiary population. 99% of Users' Committees have at least one key position held by an individual from a DAG. Water User's and Sanitation Committees (WUSC) have 47.43% women members with 100% of WUSC having women in key positions.

The selection of target groups is based on social marginalization and economic disadvantages. Out of the total 2,292,726 people reached through all the project interventions in 2022, 58.93% are women and 64.65% are from DAG. In RbF, a total of 6358 families (55% women, 80%DAG) have benefitted from riverbed farming. Through the SaMi project, a total of 470,713 beneficiaries (33% women, 16% Dalits and 67% DAG) have been reached. The various tools were developed and used to inclusion of women and DAGs and the mainstream of GSE (i.e., *Targeting Guidelines* in SaMi, *Terms of Reference*

(ToR) for Inclusive Panel Formation and project specific *GESI Strategy* in PROYEL). In terms of three working areas, the highest outreach has been made within the working field of water, food, and climate (bridges, WASH and water governance, food nutrition), followed by skill, job, income and then the voice, inclusion, and cohesion (migration, governance).

Policy advocacy and other advocacy events have been carried out in 2022 with a focus on reforming laws and practices. SaMi collaborated with different stakeholders (ILO, IOM, NNSM) for the formulation of the Strategy for Migrant Women. For policy advocacy, PROYEL engaged with the local government in Madhesh Province and the GESI policy formation process is under development. Regarding 16 Days of Activism, Media messaging (article publication, messaging through social media), orientation to Helvetas Nepal staff on GESI-related legal provisions, and National Round Table Discussion on GBV were carried out for awareness raising. Similarly, 23 national and international staff (12 women, 11 men, 4 international) participated in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process and Human Right Based Approach (HRBA), thereby learning the skills to identify human right-related issues within different thematic programs and the process to take up these issues in international advocacy mechanism (CEDAW, UDHR). To promote the political leadership of women from diverse backgrounds, the political journeys of 8 women political leaders were profiled and circulated through social media aligning with the federal-level election.

Despite these achievements, the challenges remain in improving quality of life, developing technical/masonry skills, increase public engagement through redistribution of unpaid care work for women and DAG. The inclusion of LGBTIQ+ and PWD (persons with disabilities) is very low. In 2023, Helvetas Nepal will continue targeting women and DAG as the major target group, mainstreaming GESI in all interventions to address these challenges.

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## Humanitarian and COVID-19 response

The overall humanitarian situation in Nepal in 2022 was less severe than the previous year. The reduced impact of COVID-19 provided some relief for people. Daily life and businesses started to return to a relatively normal state, especially after the first quarter when the country faced a third wave of COVID-19 caused by the Omicron variant. Moreover, the COVID-19 vaccination campaign was successfully carried out by the government throughout the year. However, public health outbreaks, such as a cholera surge in June and a major outbreak of dengue in late August, continued to affect the health systems.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Executive Committee endorsed the 'National Action Plan on Monsoon Preparedness and Response-2022' in June, but no large-scale monsoon-induced disasters were recorded. Some localized incidents occurred, mainly floods and landslides across some districts in Karnali and Sudurpaschim provinces causing damage to public infrastructures like schools, roads, bridges, and government offices, and affecting many households. However, the Helvetas Nepal working municipalities did not experience any significant damages or fatalities from natural disasters or public health outbreaks, resulting in no noteworthy humanitarian or COVID-19 response activities being carried out in the year 2022.

Meanwhile, Kamlesh Vyas, the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator (Asia) for humanitarian response, visited Helvetas Nepal to support the latter in developing its emergency response plan and the necessary standard operating procedures (SOPs). Additionally, local Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have also been developed and applied in Helvetas Nepal, which provided a framework/guideline for the scenario analysis and the process for the office operation during the pandemic situation.

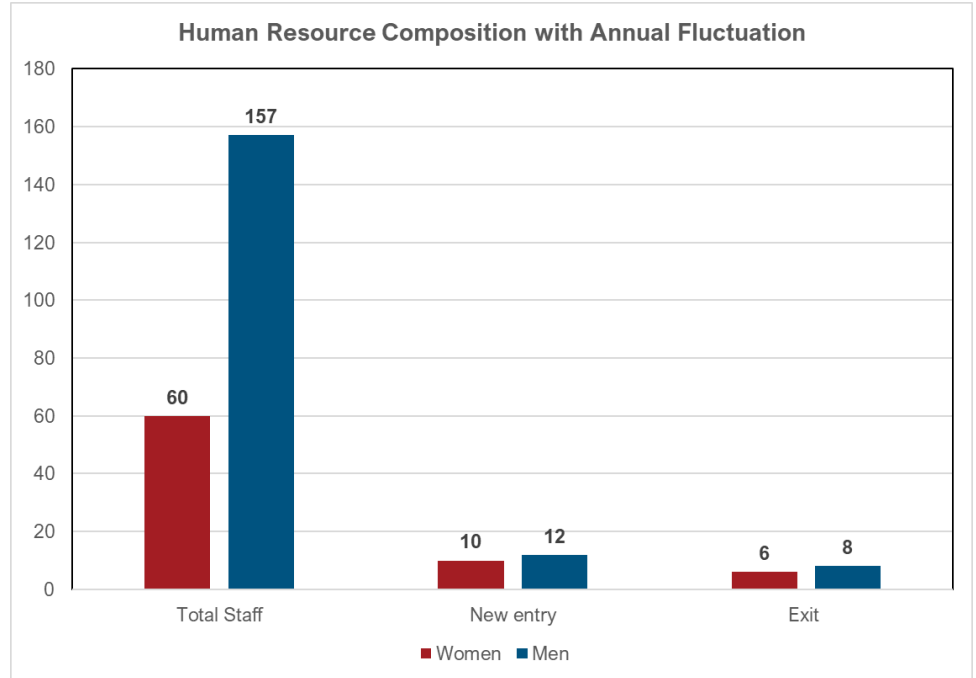
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## Human Resources

Helvetas Nepal had 217 total employees (28% women) as of December end, 2022. In the year 2022, the organization recruited a total of 22 new employees (45% women) for new projects like PROYEL, ReMi and GRAPE in Humla as well as to fill the vacant positions on ongoing projects, and a total of 14 employees (43% women) separated from the organization.

The organization was successful in bringing three women to the senior management position (Team Leader, Deputy Team Leader) in 2022. Few young professionals have joined the organization in key positions and 38 young people from the disadvantaged group got enrolled in the traineeship program for its projects. To retain competent human resources, the National Personnel Regulations (NPR-Nepal) was updated, and it carried out the salary survey in 2022.

Despite a dengue outbreak in Nepal in 2022, staff movements to the field were sped up due to a decline in COVID cases. Helvetas Nepal believes in the organizational learning model and encourages its employees to expand their capacity through on-the-job learning, peer learning and by



participating in relevant training and workshops. Physical and online capacity development initiatives were carried out as per the projects' needs. Additionally, the Country Office organized training on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (PSEAH), and the Federal State Building sessions in each province office to enhance the comprehension and awareness of all staff members.

Similarly, orientation on grievance handling mechanisms, an online management information system (MIS), an online leave management system, and a travel order system were provided to all staff members.

Training on digitalization, visualization and GIS was held with participation from relevant employees from projects. Helvetas Nepal hosted an Asia regional workshop on Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Process and Human Rights Based Approach on 19-21 Dec 2022.

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## Personal Story

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### **My Journey with Trail Bridge Support Unit (TBSU)/Helvetas**

Badri Kumar Shrestha, Team Leader, TBSU

#### **The fear before a paradigm shift!**

It was a paradigm shift in my career, accepting the risks of traveling on an unfamiliar road and displacing myself from my comfort zone. I previously managed an integrated community development program focused on children's rights. Initially hesitant, I considered joining a narrower technical infrastructure project related to trail bridges in Nepal, mainly consisting of civil engineering professionals. My apprehension was partly due to my unfamiliarity with the organization Helvetas and its trail bridge program, a sentiment echoed by friends who were unfamiliar with the program as well.



#### **Initial days: the team and culture!**

Having managed various development projects extensively across districts, the trail bridge sector was entirely new to me. This novelty made me curious, emotional, and a bit uncertain. Joining a team focused on engineering, with limited knowledge of the Swiss support program and Helvetas in Nepal, was a mix of excitement and nervousness. However, pleasantly surprised, Helvetas provided a more welcoming and supportive environment than expected. A key factor was the Country Director, a native citizen, who infused the organization's culture with Nepalese values. Working alongside colleagues who understood the socio-cultural context was also a delight.

#### **Achieving the yearly target: exceeding expectations!**

With a dedicated team, a supportive operational environment, and a community willing to meet project deadlines for trail bridge construction, achieving targets becomes streamlined. Up until 2016, about 400 trail bridges were constructed, against the 500 targets. In the following year, the program consistently exceeded the target by over 10%. Assisting the Government of Nepal in building quality trail bridges is a source of pride for Helvetas. For those involved in the sub-sector, it is especially rewarding to have constructed over 600 trail bridges annually. This trend continued, and in the 2022/2023 fiscal year, a record-breaking 740 trail bridges were completed in the sub-sector, marking the joy of 10,000 bridges built in Nepal.

#### **Not only river crossings but connecting people: physical unification of a nation's land!**

Most Nepalis know about Nepal's border with India along the Mahakali River, with villages like Dodhara and Chandani on the opposite bank. Few realize that beyond these villages lies the Jogbudha River, with isolated Nepali villages on its other side. These villages rely on Khatima Bazar, India, for essential services. In 2017, a trail bridge over the Jogbudha River was built, connecting these isolated villages to their district headquarters in Kanchanpur and the rest of the mainland for the first time. This is not only an isolated case; there are several more examples from across the country.

#### **Ups and downs!**

When I reflect, the journey has not always been rosy and flowery. When we talk about flowers, there are always different seasons when they bloom: sweating hot, shivering cold, when it is dry or rainy. That is very natural. Similarly, as the project has many accountabilities that lie with the community, Helvetas, SDC, and the Nepal Government (all three spheres) at once - coordinating all the above and creating a path to move together has been challenging but also exciting and provided great satisfaction.

#### **Something personal!**

It was an exciting journey and a great opportunity to enrich my knowledge of SDC-Helvetas culture and the way of working in development initiatives. The project provided me with a chance to serve the downtrodden, isolated, and deprived community members from all over Nepal. I enjoyed traveling to communities and remote bridge sites in 76 districts out of 77 districts and introducing myself to the prominent people in the trail bridge-building community across the nation. The knowledge and skills I gained from the organization and the program, as I value them, are the invaluable assets I earned. Thankful to all! Grateful Badri!

## Budget and Investment

The approved budget for 2022 was CHF 10.76 million, a slight decrease from the approved budget for 2021 of CHF 11.88 million. The utilization of the budget continued to be on the lower side, with 87 % of the total budget being utilized, though it is increased than last year. The local and Federal elections slightly affected the implementation of activities.

The budget utilization ratio segregated by working field is given in the table below:

Working Field	Budget	% of Budget	Expenses	% of Expenses	Variation	Variation %
WASH and Water Governance	2,451,627	22.77	2,299,056	24.45	152,571	6.22
Food and Nutrition	292,695	2.72	260,552	2.77	32,143	10.98
Climate and Disaster Resilience	42,324	0.39	45,682	0.49	(3,358)	(7.93)
Bridges and Roads	2,312,464	21.48	2,306,345	24.53	6,118	0.26
Governance and civic spaces	293,557	2.73	208,514	2.22	85,043	28.97
Migration	2,577,199	23.93	2,066,634	21.98	510,565	19.81
Vocational Skills	2,755,867	25.59	2,170,419	23.08	585,448	21.24
Private Sector Development	42,324	0.39	45,682	0.49	(3,358)	(7.93)
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,768,057</b>		<b>9,402,884</b>	<b>87.00</b>		

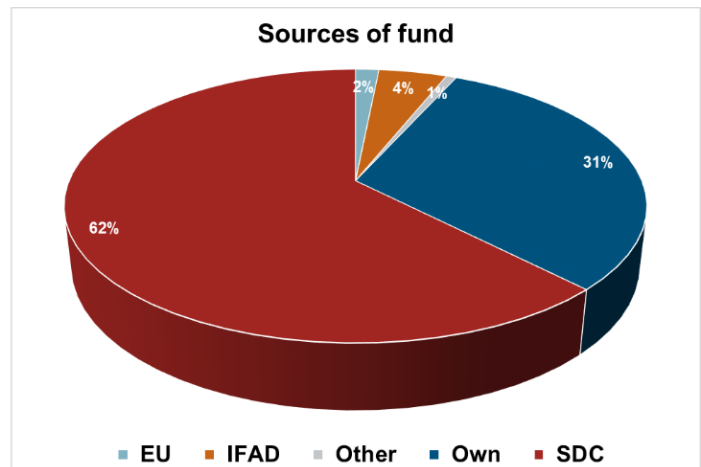
The bulk of the variation of the budget is in the working field of "Governance and Civic Spaces" followed by the working field of "Vocational Skills". This is mostly due to the delays in the implementation of some planned training activities primarily because of local and provincial/federal elections.

The start of a new phase of one of the SDC mandates and the parallel extension of the current phase helped in the slight increase of the annual budget volume from 2021. The budget is expected to be at a volume of CHF 11 million for the subsequent two years and then gradually decrease with the planned closure of three SDC mandates.

The annual audit for 2022 is concluded, and there have not been any reports of major control weakness or any material issues. The auditors have generally appreciated the robust systems in place. Some weakness in documentation is expected to surface due to the scattered and remoteness of the project working areas.

The organization is putting an effort towards enhancing the timeliness and the quality of financial reports generated at the country level. The Country Office, in close coordination with the Head Office finance, has started speedy consolidations at the country level.

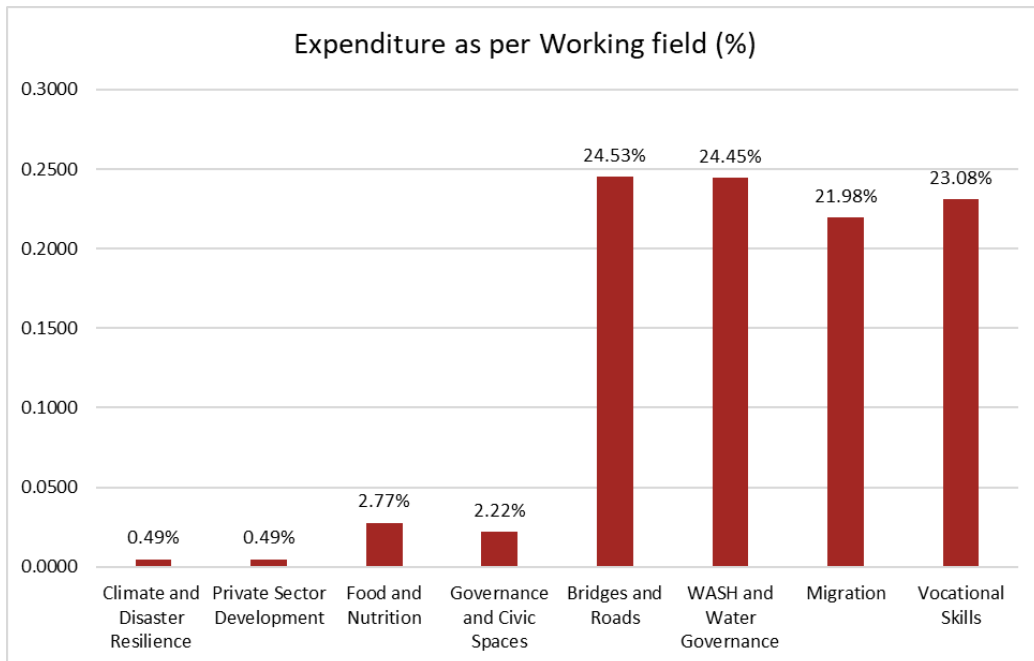
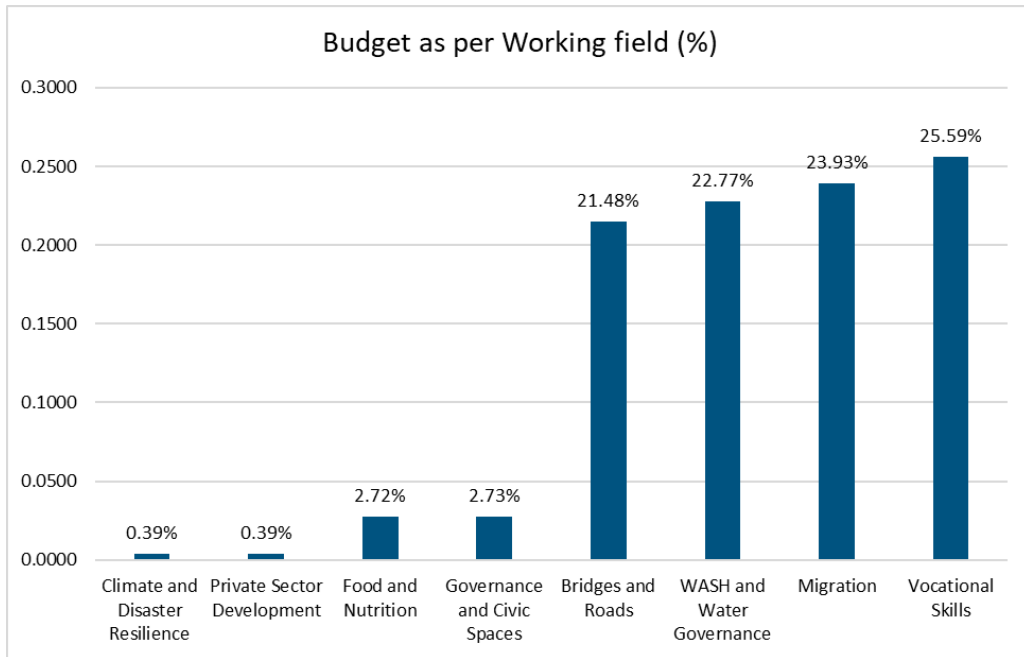
The appreciation of the importance of knowledge and capacities of finance personnel is growing within the organization with a thrust both from the Head Office. Helvetas Nepal, together with other Helvetas countries, is working on strengthening capacities at the national level and will continue its effort in the year to come.





## Investment by Working Fields

The budget and investment for the year 2022 are reported by the working fields of Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation. Of the eight working fields, Bridges and Roads was the biggest field in terms of investment volume utilising 21% of total funds spent, followed by WASH and water governance with 23% expenses volume. Migration and Vocational Skills were also working fields with significant investment, at 24% and 26% respectively. Climate and disaster resilience as well as Private Sector Development absorbed less than 1% of total funds, Food and Nutrition, and Governance and Civic spaces absorbed around 3% each.



## Audit Report

# CSC & Co

Chartered Accountants

Mahamati Bhawan  
175, Gairidhara Marg, Gairidhara  
PO Box: 4861, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Tel: +977-1-4004580, 4004581, 4004582  
Fax: +977-1-4004578  
E-mail: csc@cscnepal.com  
Web: www.cscnepal.com

### Independent auditor's report on financial information

**HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation,  
Maulbeerstrasse 10, 3001 Berne, Switzerland**

### Opinion

Based on the FDFA's Terms of Reference, we have audited the financial information of the Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation Nepal, which comprises the following financial information:

- the balance sheet as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 and the statement of income and expenditure for the year, starting on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 and ending on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022,
- a breakdown of budget vs expenditure by project, and
- the notes to the financial information including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial information on Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation Nepal for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 have been prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with the accounting policies described in the notes and comply with the requirements of the FDFA's Terms of Reference dated 18.03.2022.

### Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). Our responsibilities under those provisions and standards are further described in the "Auditor's Responsibilities for the audit of the financial information" section of our report.

We are independent of the entity in accordance with the requirements of the IESBA Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

### Emphasis of matter – Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Note 3 to the financial information, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial information is prepared to provide information in connection with the audit of financial information of the HELVETAS Swiss Inter-cooperation, Switzerland. As a result, the statement may not be suitable for another purpose. Our audit opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

### Management's Responsibility for the financial information

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial information. This responsibility

includes designing, implementing and maintaining internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial information that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies, and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.



### **Auditor's Responsibilities for the audit of the financial information**

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial information as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial information.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial information, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by Management.



Bikesh Madhikarmi  
Partner

Date: 24 March 2023


Place: Kathmandu, Nepal

UDIN: 230324CA01391f8P4E


<b>HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Nepal</b>				
<b>BALANCE SHEET</b>				
<b>As at December 31, 2022</b>				
				Currency ( NPR)
Account Group	Description	Reference/ Schedule Numbers	2022	2021
<b>ASSETS</b>				
1000	Cash in hand	1	217,208	102,015
1100	Cash at Bank	2	96,069,652	209,039,279
1400	Advances	3	63,369,389	41,157,406
1500	Deposits	4	25,769,289	146,789
	<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>185,425,538</b>	<b>250,445,489</b>
<b>CAPITAL &amp; LIABILITIES</b>				
2000	<b>Current Liabilities</b>	5	<b>39,577,957</b>	<b>30,009,418</b>
2010	Statutory Liabilities		1,011,427	1,177,527
2020	Staff Liabilities		28,405,844	26,006,773
2030	Other Current Liabilities		9,952,686	2,613,732
2040	Program Creditors		208,000	211,386
<b>Fund Balance</b>				
2100	CAPITAL HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, Head Office, Switzerland		145,847,581	220,436,071
	<b>Total Liabilities</b>		<b>185,425,538</b>	<b>250,445,489</b>

The annexed notes/ schedules form an integral part of this Balance Sheet



As per our report of the even date




**Pragya Adhikari**  
Head of Finance and Administration



**Dr. Prabin Manandhar**  
Country Director

**Bikesh Madhikarmi**  
Partner  
CSC & Co.  
Chartered Accountants




Place: Bakhundole, Lalitpur  
Date: 24 March 2023


<b>HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Nepal</b>				
<b>Statement of Income and Expenditure</b>				
<b>For the Year 2022: 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022</b>				
				<b>Currency (NPR)</b>
<b>Account Group</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Reference/ Schedule Numbers</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
	<b>Income:</b>			
9000	<b>Remittances / Grant receipts</b>			
	Remittances from Head Office	6	1,054,025,012	989,999,319
	Remittances from local donors	7	73,111,670	41,520,320
	<b>Total Receipts</b>		<b>1,127,136,682</b>	<b>1,031,519,639</b>
	<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
51	<b>Personnel costs Expatriates</b>		<b>889,624</b>	<b>339,914</b>
5130	Expatriates Recruitment costs		-	113,833
5140	Expatriates HRD costs		-	-
5150	Expatriate Travelling and Representation costs		776,324	221,563
5151	Expatriate Homeleave & Transfer Costs		46,112	-
5160	Expatriate Foreign residence costs		-	-
5169	Other Expatriation costs		67,188	4,518
52	<b>Personnel costs Nationals</b>		<b>442,552,040</b>	<b>389,851,009</b>
5200	Personnel Cost Nationals		400,172,075	367,565,801
5250	Travel & Representation costs National Staff		42,379,965	22,285,208
54	<b>Local Consultants</b>		<b>11,427,948</b>	<b>9,236,897</b>
5400	National Consultants fees		9,910,232	7,772,029
5450	National Consultants Travel & Repr. Costs		1,517,716	1,464,868
71	<b>Operating Cost</b>		<b>81,407,635</b>	<b>63,316,978</b>
7110	Vehicles		22,250,887	15,823,219
7120	Office costs		53,370,000	44,266,798
7150	Other operating costs		5,786,748	3,226,961
72	<b>Project Costs International</b>		<b>666,347,435</b>	<b>599,728,314</b>
7210	Education and Training costs		142,237,896	56,467,002
7220	Investment and Equipment costs		1,455,372	1,593,910
7231	Contribution to NGO		120,348,810	113,151,648
7232	Contribution to Govt Authorities		277,370	19,055,968
7233	Contribution to Private Sector		99,107,633	77,459,794
7234	Contribution to Beneficiaries		273,078,642	314,991,396
7239	Various contribution to Partners		29,841,712	17,008,596
	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1,202,624,682</b>	<b>1,062,473,112</b>
	<b>Other Receipts:</b>			
8200	Bank Interest		-	-
	<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>		<b>(75,488,000)</b>	<b>(30,953,473)</b>

The annexed notes/ schedules form an integral part of this Statement of Income and Expenditure.


As per our report of the even date




**Pragya Adhikari**  
Head of Finance and Administration




**Dr. Prabin Manandhar**  
Country Director



**Bikesh Madhikarma**  
Partner  
CSC & Co.  
Chartered Accountants





Place: Bakhundole, Lalitpur  
Date: 24 March 2023

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## Ways Forward

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In 2022, Helvetas Nepal focused its interventions on issues related to water, food, climate and trail bridges, skills, jobs, enterprises and private sector engagement, youth, governance, and safer migration. The organization has contributed to federal state building by strengthening the system and thematic competencies at the provincial and local levels.

In 2023, Helvetas Nepal will phase out the trail bridge sub-sector program and expand migration governance (SaMi and ReMi) and vocational skills, jobs, and enterprise (ENSSURE, SAMRIDDHI, and InElam). The organization will increase engagement in rural-urban linkages, strengthen work with youth significantly, improve the humanitarian-development nexus, strengthen gender equality and social justice, and leverage the digital transformation in line with our extended country strategy (2023-24).

Helvetas Nepal will continue to diversify acquisitions in 2023. The organization intends to have one new SDC project, get approval for the detailed plan for NAMA Facility implementation, one USAID / FCDO project as well as increase our fund projects including Esperanza Foundation. Helvetas Nepal will further strengthen partnerships with SDC, EU, IFAD, and GiZ and will explore consortiums with new private consulting firms. Building on our strengths and successes, Helvetas Nepal will intensify private sector engagement, advisory support, and knowledge management. The organization will focus on quality, accountability, and human resource management.

Helvetas Nepal has reinforced its partnership with Alliance 2015 Members as the country lead (Oct 2022 to Sept 2024) with the initiation of a joint project, and joint emergency preparedness and response plan. The organization will continue to participate in and host regional workshops and exchanges. In 2023, Helvetas Nepal will host a Global HR workshop, digital M&E, and policy advocacy.

Considering the above, Helvetas Nepal will focus on the following three areas:

### 1. Quality Programming

- Enhance donor intelligence and diversify acquisition.
- Build on the niche (migration, skills, and WASH) and strengthen new focus (climate mitigation, youth, urbanization, and digital transformation)
- Strengthen cross-learning and synergy between Helvetas projects at the Province Level
- Improve assessment, monitoring, communications, and knowledge management.
- Improve DRR, policy advocacy, and UPR monitoring.

### 2. Systems and Compliances

- Strengthen internal controls, internal review, and internal audit.
- Strengthen procurement performance
- Functional grievance handling, and security and risk response

### 3. Human Resources Management

- Effective recruitment and onboarding
- Strengthen second-line leadership in project management.
- Staff capacity building and performance management

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## Thanks

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We are deeply grateful to a multitude of entities that contribute to the realization of our collective mission. This includes numerous government agencies, donors, international implementation partners, national non-governmental partners, and local implementation partners. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all those who persistently support us in achieving the desired outcomes and outputs. Furthermore, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and thanks to the individual local resource persons, cooperatives, users' committees, experienced leader farmers, and consultants. Their invaluable support and services have been instrumental in our endeavours, and we are truly thankful for their contributions.