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SUPPORTING YOUTH IN BECOMING POSITIVE CHANGE AGENTS

Young people – of all genders – can be positive change agents in their societies if they live in supportive environments that value them and provide safe spaces where they can actively participate in social, economic and political opportunities. But when young people are excluded from civic participation and feel marginalized, they may become a threat to the peace and security of their communities. Helvetas has developed a set of approaches to work intergenerationally, interfaith and cross-culturally with youth to address root causes that hinder their empowerment and reaching their full potential.

ABOUT HELVETAS

Helvetas was founded in 1955 as the first private organization for development cooperation in Switzerland. It has since grown to become a global nonprofit with sister organizations in the U.S. and Germany, and with projects in about 30 countries in Africa, Asia, South America and Eastern Europe.

We are a member of the [Alliance2015](#), a strategic network of eight European non-governmental organizations with an annual programming volume of over €640 million.

For over 60 years, Helvetas has been contributing to efforts to alleviate poverty, working to advance human rights, and fighting injustice across the globe.

HOW WE WORK WITH YOUTH

We see ourselves as a temporary facilitator. With our support, key system actors from local communities, public institutions and the private sector find the causes of system failure and transform systems to serve as many disadvantaged people as possible.

We rely on a combination of thematic expertise (advisory services), field work (over 250 projects) and policy dialogue (advocating for policy change). We create synergies by teaming up with similar minds and building long-term relationships. Helvetas is a member of 77 professional networks and has over 600 local partners that ensure our solutions are locally owned.

ABOUT OUR WORK WITH YOUTH AS POSITIVE CHANGE AGENTS

In most of our partner countries, the young generation makes up a significant proportion of the population and is growing. Despite this representation, youth are marginalized and face the risk of social, economic and political exclusion. For a successful project implementation to ensure social cohesion and peace, young people must be included in all interventions. We engage directly with youth, young decision-makers, and youth networks and organizations; we work intergenerationally, inter-culturally and inter-gender to promote mutual understanding and respect. Age-wise, we loosely define youth to lie between 16 and 30 years, but acknowledge different definitions of youth depending on the context and adapt country-specific definitions accordingly. We understand that “youth” is not a homogenous group, and that their lived experiences differ based on gender, cultural background, ethnicity, education, employment status, rural or urban context, and many more criteria.

Our Approach

Prevention of Violent Extremism: The causes of radicalization and violent extremism are complex and manifold, ranging from underemployment to lack of representation and participation in decision-making processes. Helvetas developed tools to address these causes and to strengthen social cohesion and inclusion of marginalized youth, ranging from intercultural dialogues, sensitization on the use of social media, and using arts and culture for peace mitigation.

Gender and Social Equity: Our projects start with an analysis that applies a gender and social equity lens to ensure that the practical and strategic needs of the most disadvantaged individuals and groups are considered, and that they benefit from our interventions while enhancing gender equality, social inclusion and respect of rights among youth.

Civic Engagement: Our projects focus on promoting empowerment and meaningful involvement of young people in social, economic and political activities for a sense of belonging and ownership, to practice their civic duties, and to claim their rights. We use activities such as peer-led community volunteerism for social, life and vocational skills development.

Our Impact

We consider youth a transversal topic, and young people are included in all our projects across our different working areas. Every year, Helvetas supports up to 420,000 people in claiming their civil rights. Yet when we talk about results, we seek to measure our impact in sustainable and systemic change. Examples of such impact from the past few years include:

- Civil society alliances successfully advocated for conducive NGO legislation;
- Through increased participation of youth in community decision making and local governance processes, the voice of youth and inclusive practices are strengthened;
- National governments developed decentralization policies and implementation plans;
- National school curriculums integrated Helvetas' methodology for prevention of youth radicalization based on experiential peace pedagogy: [Tune In-Manual](#)
- State-run migration centers were set up to provide assistance to young migrant workers.

WHERE WE WORK WITH YOUTH ON BECOMING POSITIVE CHANGE AGENTS

While almost all of our country programs (shown in dark grey) have at least one project with a focus on youth, the red highlighted countries specifically work on empowering youth as positive change agents.



FEATURED PROJECTS

LANKAN YOUTH CAN – SRI LANKA

FUNDING SOURCE: ZIVIK
DURATION: 2019 TO PRESENT
BUDGET: 313,000 CHF

The project promotes a pluralistic society with increased youth civic activism and participation in democratic processes, to further demands of youth belonging to all ethnic-religious communities in 5 different districts in Sri Lanka. This project builds capacity of civil society for participatory governance and increasing the voice and space for youth. The project also aims to sponsor civic activism using popular social media platforms.



A young woman raises her voice to speak against the ethnic discriminations and conflicts, while promoting a futuristic and pluralistic society, in a public forum.

Selected results

- 150 young men and women belonging to different ethnicities are expanding the Lankan Youth Community Activists Network (LankanYouthCAN), while the [digital platform](#) surpasses 30,000 followers, reaching over a million views.

Key insights

- The youth are energetic catalysts who want to work in both physical and digital spheres, which need to be balanced when implementing activities.

MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT FOR PEACE AND STABILITY – PAKISTAN

FUNDING SOURCE: THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NETHERLANDS
DURATION: 2018 TO PRESENT
BUDGET: 4.45 MILLION CHF

With underemployment and poverty being key drivers for violent extremism, the project aims to address these issues by creating sustainable income-generating livelihood opportunities for young women and men in Pakistan in an inclusive and conflict-sensitive manner.



A young woman practicing the embroidery skills she learned through the project.

Selected results

- 1,085 youth (381 agriculture and 704 skills) have benefitted directly or indirectly from the project intervention. Out of this total, 43 beneficiaries are Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).
- Project has supported youth in learning 18 different types of skills and in 8 different agriculture value chains.
- Local courts, traditionally led by village elders, increasingly include young men as members.

Key insights

- Youth are fast learners and more willing than other age groups to adopt technology in a culturally conservative society.
- Youths are more interested to learn vocational than agricultural skills.

MIASA PROJECT – MADAGASCAR

FUNDING SOURCE: MUNICIPALITY OF MÜNSINGEN AND HELVETAS
DURATION: 2019 TO PRESENT
BUDGET: 185,000 CHF

Through the provision of vocational skills training, the project aims to improve the employment prospects and livelihood of young people in Madagascar. It strengthens local training providers to mentor youth on their way to (self-) employment. Besides economic inclusion, the project encourages young women and men to participate in local development initiatives in their communities to have a voice in decision-making processes.



A trainee of the MIASA project is practicing her tailoring skills at home.

Selected results

- 334 youth have undergone vocational and entrepreneurship training and have received support in entering (self-) employment and increased their income.
- Young people have shown increased engagement in their communities (e.g., in reforestation activities and the fight against COVID-19).

Key insights

- Partnership with local private companies have enabled young people access to decent work.
- The service sector (tertiary sector) attracts young people, especially those from the outskirts of towns and large villages.
- Companies as well as municipal or regional authorities are better able to mobilize youth and work in alignment with local economic development initiatives. Trainings integrated into local development plans and initiatives yield better results.

KEMENIK* – GUATEMALA

FUNDING SOURCE: HELVETAS
DURATION: 2018 TO PRESENT
BUDGET: 1.15 MILLION CHF

The project promotes the participation of women in decision-making processes in their municipalities. It also works with the municipalities to improve the provision of public services women consider not satisfactory. It actively involves young women to raise awareness on their rights and build their capacities to meaningfully engage in their communities.



Young women and men hold discussions during a community meeting.

Selected results

- A range of user-friendly knowledge tools, manuals and guidelines have been produced that will help in scaling and replicating the project.
- In 2020, 54 civil society organizations participated in organizational strengthening processes, whereby 26 completed the planned process.

Key insights

- Strong female leaders of different ages have been identified and their capacities strengthened through counseling and personal/group reflections.
- The involvement of young people and men has encouraged rethinking masculinity and values in both private and public spaces through a complementary role approach, thereby promoting the leadership of women and their participation in decision-making spaces.

MORE INFORMATION

Learn more about our youth projects: <https://www.helvetas.org/en/switzerland/what-we-do/our-topics/youth>

OUR EXPERTS

Our team consists of highly professional, committed and multilingual advisors with many years of experience working in international development cooperation across the globe.



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Helvetas has an internal youth group, consisting of experts working across the globe, who regularly exchange and share experiences to build on organizational expertise.

WHAT WE CAN OFFER

- Supporting the design, implementation and evaluation of projects.
- Promoting innovation in projects through applied research, sourcing of good international practices and facilitating global exchange of knowhow.
- Developing and adapting methodologies, tools and approaches related to working with youth, such as Conflict Sensitivity, Political Economy & Power Analysis, Experiential Peace Education and Arts & Culture for Social Cohesion.
- Training facilitators and future trainers in the above-mentioned methodologies and approaches.
- Conducting various assessments such as feasibility analyses and political economy and power analyses.
- Capitalizing and sharing of project experiences.

PARTNERSHIPS, ALLIANCES AND NETWORKS

Helvetas is a member of 77 professional networks and alliances and has over 600 local partners that ensure our solutions are locally owned. This includes youth networks and organizations in various countries.



Youth of Osh, Kyrgyzstan



National Youth Council,
Burkina Faso



Young artists for social justice,
Guatemala