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ADVOCACY AND POLICY DIALOGUE

Helvetas supports development actors in defending their basic rights and promoting their legitimate interests towards decision makers at all levels through transparent, evidence-based public dialogue and action. We strengthen capacities, facilitate dialogue, and engage in advocacy and lobbying.

**ADVOCACY
WORKS!**

ABOUT HELVETAS

For over 65 years, Helvetas has been contributing to efforts to alleviate poverty and working to advance human rights and overcome injustice across the globe. We support development and emergency relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation projects in over 30 countries in Africa, Asia, South America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

Founded in 1955 as the first private organization for development cooperation in Switzerland, Helvetas is now a global nonprofit with sister organizations in the U.S. and Germany. We are active in the areas of water, food and climate; skills, jobs, and income, including responsible private sector development; and governance, migration, and conflict transformation. Gender and social equity, alongside advocacy and policy dialogue are priority transversal themes.

ABOUT OUR ADVOCACY AND POLICY DIALOGUE

Human development is determined by political, economic and social frameworks at all levels. These can support or obstruct sustainable, equitable development, and can favor or hinder the work of development actors at local, national or international level. Consequently, advocacy and policy dialogue are a key intervention mechanism for Helvetas to achieve its strategic objectives in all thematic working areas.

Our approach

Helvetas supports development actors in defending their basic rights and promoting their legitimate interests towards decision makers through transparent and evidence-based public dialogue and action. Following a **human-rights based approach**, Helvetas systematically uses international human rights frameworks and mechanisms to advance specific issues of concern within the context of development projects. We work at three levels to achieve systemic and sustainable policy impact:

- **People:** We strengthen the capacities of people and communities to claim their rights and advocate for their legitimate interests.
- **Partnerships:** We support our strategic partners in their own advocacy efforts and strengthen relevant networks and alliances.
- **Frame conditions:** We engage for better policies, laws, rules and regulations for sustainable, inclusive development.

HOW WE WORK

Our primary role is to be a temporary facilitator. With our support, key system actors from local communities, public institutions, private sector and civil society work together to identify the causes of system failure and to transform those systems to serve people living with inequality.

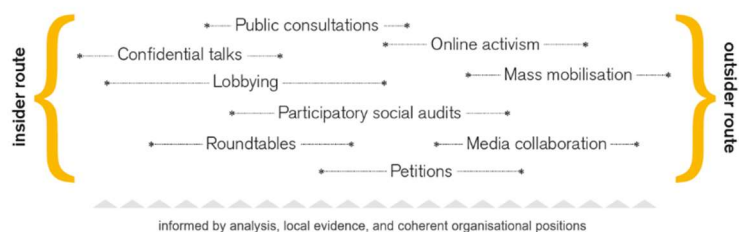
The impact of our work is the product of a three-pronged approach: project work, thematic and methodological advice, and advocacy and policy dialogue at local, regional and international levels.

We create synergies, and promote learning and innovation through strategic partnerships. Helvetas is a member of almost 80 professional networks and alliances and works with over 850 local partners to ensure solutions are locally owned.

What we do

To advance advocacy and policy dialogue, we

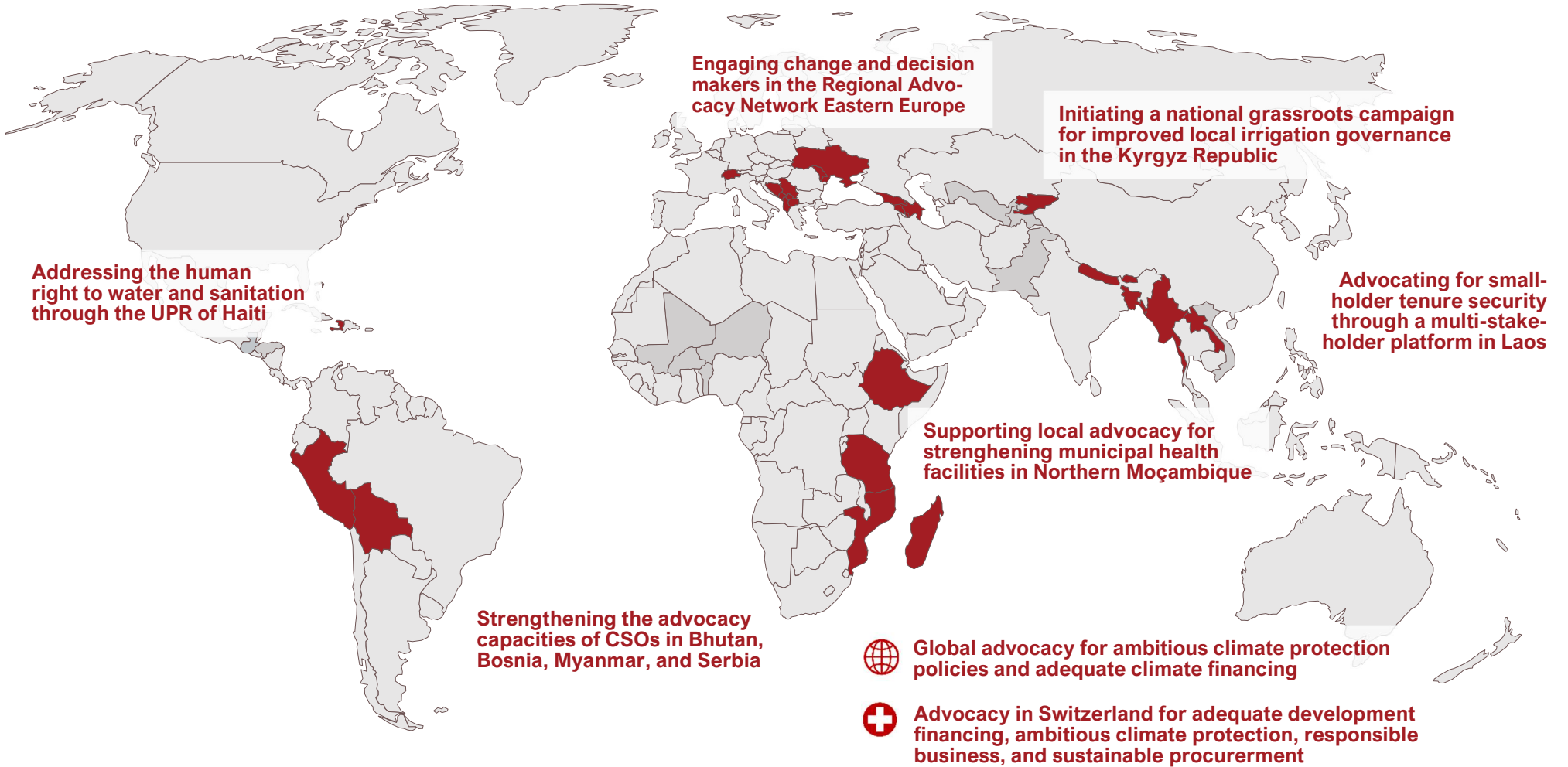
- **Strengthen capacities** of communities, CSOs, SMEs, local governments and networks to advocate on their own.
- **Facilitate dialogue and exchange** across sectors and levels, between state governments, civil society and the private sector, including through established human rights mechanisms.
- **Engage in policy dialogue and lobbying** towards public and private decision makers in Switzerland and globally, with the aim to reinforce our partners' efforts and advance our issues of concern.



WHERE WE ENGAGE IN ADVOCACY AND POLICY DIALOGUE

■ Countries where Helvetas supported specific advocacy & policy initiatives in the period 2021-2024

■ Helvetas partner country



IRRIGATION REFORMS | KYRGYZSTAN

Funding	Foundation for the Third Millennium, with support from SDC
Key Partners	NGO Abad, Kyrgyzstan
Duration	2018-2022 2023-2025
Volume	750'000 600'000 CHF
Learn more	demilgeluutop.tilda.ws/en

Grassroots advocacy for irrigation

The Irrigation Water Integrity Project in Kyrgyzstan (IWIP) initiated and supported a bottom-up advocacy campaign for improved national legislation on local self-government and irrigation. Local actors lobbied the highest level – and succeeded in creating frame conditions for sustainable irrigation at the local level and improving local governance. Today, IWIP is seen as a model for how INGOs can support grassroots advocacy so that local communities can empower themselves and exert political agency. The Turning Irrigation Reforms into Practice Project (TIRIP) now supports pilot municipalities in the effective implementation of the new law.



Community representatives meet with national parliamentarians to discuss local irrigation issues (Helvetas)

Key results

- Successful reform of the national legislation on local self-government
- Improved local irrigation governance

Key insights

- Bottom-up advocacy takes time – but works!
- Combining local ownership with scientific evidence and legal expertise adds value

FOR AN ACTIVE CIVIL SOCIETY | SERBIA

Funding	Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC)
Key Partners	Civic Initiatives, Serbia
Duration	2019-2023 2023-2027
Volume	5.75 5.9 Mio. CHF
Learn more	act.org.rs/en

Protecting and promoting civic space

Amid the backdrop of a steady decline in democratic governance, For an Active Civil Society (ACT) supports Serbian CSOs in strengthening their institutional capacities as well as their accountability and responsiveness towards citizens; facilitates CSO networks for common issues of concern; and fosters exchange and collaboration between CSOs and local governments with the aim to advance citizen engagement for inclusive and sustainable development.



Citizens meeting in Kraljevo, Serbia (polekol.org)

Key results

- So far, 123,800 people benefitted from services and initiatives of ACT-supported CSOs
- 125 CSO advocacy initiatives supported at local and national level

Key Insights

- Combining trainings and tailor-made mentoring for CSOs yields best results
- Linking CSOs with informal movements to accelerate citizen mobilization and build trust

DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE | BHUTAN

Funding	European Union
Key Partners	International IDEA, Parliamentary Secretariat, CSO Authority, Bhutan Media Foundation, Bhutan Centre for Media & Democracy
Duration	2017-2021
Volume	1.3 Mio. CHF
Learn more	CSO Support in Bhutan

Supporting a nascent democracy

Since Bhutan's democracy began in 2008, more and more CSOs, cooperatives, youth and women groups have registered with the state. They seek their place in society but face challenges with capacities and understanding their role. The Nyamdrel Project provided grants and strengthened CSO capacities in governance, finance and advocacy while promoting sector engagement and dialogue with the National Parliament through inclusive and transparent advocacy, media work, and lobbying.



CSO activists draft their advocacy plan in Haa, Bhutan (Helvetas)

Key results

- 727 CSOs trained in advocacy & policy dialogue, media work and parliamentary lobbying
- Four local campaigns initiated
- [Bhutan Advocacy Toolbox](#) published
- Contribution to UPR Bhutan (State Report)

Key insights

- Solid understanding of parliamentary processes is key for effective advocacy.
- Open and transparent exchange between CSOs and elected policy makers helps to demystify «advocacy» and lower barriers.

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT | SWITZERLAND

Funding	Membership fees & donations
Key Partners	Max Havelaar, Public Eye, Solidar Suisse, Swiss Fair Trade, Fastenopfer
Duration	2008-2022
Volume	60'000 CHF

Lobbying for social public procurement

With the aim to make public procurement in Switzerland more sustainable, Helvetas and its CSO partners participated in the reform of the Federal Act on Public Procurement from beginning to end. Helvetas participated in public consultations and parliamentary hearings, engaged in discussions with the government, the public administration and the private sector, and lobbied members of parliament – with the result that the new Act explicitly allows for and fosters socially sustainable procurement.



Swiss National Council (swissinfo)

Key results

- New Federal Act on Public Procurement explicitly fosters socially and ecologically sustainable procurement
- Paradigm change towards sustainable procurement within the public and private sector

Key insights

- A strong, long-term institutional commitment is essential to accompany legal reforms from beginning to end, and to build expertise, credibility, and institutional standing.
- Strategically sharing roles and responsibilities among partners and allies allows to address various target groups and vary the campaign narrative.

REGIONAL ADVOCACY NETWORK

Funding	Helvetas own funds
Key Partners	Helvetas projects across the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe
Duration	Ongoing since 2018
Volume	-
Learn more	regionaladvocacynetwork.com

Brokering advocacy skills & knowledge

This Regional Advocacy Network (RAN) brings together like-minded individuals from diverse sectors, such as the private sector, national and local governments, academia, civil society, educators, and interest groups. Through regular virtual and in-person exchanges, participants discuss successful solutions applied by various Helvetas projects and partners. The network fosters consistent knowledge sharing, allowing participants to learn from best practices and tackle challenges specific to their country and the broader region.



RAN Annual Meeting 2023, Prishtina (Helvetas)

Key results

- Regular webinars with projects, partners and external experts on issues of concern, with >80 contributors, and >600 active participants
- Annual regional face-to-face meeting, with host government and development partners
- Advocacy ideation through [#DevPolHack](https://twitter.com/DevPolHack)

Key insights

- There is great interest in the region to learn from and challenge each other with regard to advocacy and policy dialogue.
- Fostering exchange and mutual understanding among the state, private, and civil sector helps to build bridges and cross boundaries.

HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED ADVOCACY

Funding	Various funding sources
Key Partners	Local CSOs, UPR Info, CIVICUS
Duration	Ongoing since 2018
Volume	-
Learn more	Advocating through the UNHR Advocating through the EUHR

Creating a safe space for advocacy

Since 2018, Helvetas has advanced human rights-based advocacy across its thematic working areas. By advocating through the United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms or the European Human Rights Mechanisms, Helvetas advances specific policy issues in a structured and safe manner. In restricted political contexts, this has proven to be an effective way to convene strategic local partners and strengthen their networks and capacities for advocacy and policy dialogue.



UN Human Rights Council, Geneva ([una.org.uk](https://www.una.org.uk))

Key results

- Universal Periodic Review (UPR) submissions by CSOs in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Haiti, Laos, Nepal, Tajikistan etc.
- Systematic follow-up with the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, in collaboration with international partners (e.g. UPR Info, CIVICUS)
- Uptake of several UPR recommendations by respective governments; adoption of recommendations by UN Special Rapporteurs

Key insights

- Advocating through international mechanisms takes time, but helps to open new entry points for dialogue in difficult contexts.
- For CSOs facing repression and intimidation, creating a safe space for critical dialogue on issues of concern is a value in itself.

VOICES FROM OUR PROJECTS



«This was my first time seeing advocacy activities produce results. This gave us motivation and incentive to continue. I am also glad that our experience is proof for civil society that advocacy works!»

Chinara Jusupova, local councilor and activist for sustainable local irrigation, Kyrgyzstan

«I have discovered both the science and art of advocacy, equipping me with valuable insights and skills that will enhance my efforts in this field.»

Chablop Passang Tshering, Founder and Executive Director, Bhutan Toilet Organization



«The Regional Advocacy Network is a valuable opportunity to learn more on how to navigate advocacy in restricted spaces. Engaging with experts and practitioners provides valuable insights and strategies for effective advocacy.»

Valbona Karakaçi, Helvetas Regional Advisor for the Western Balkans and Lead Facilitator of the Regional Advocacy Network, Albania



MORE INFORMATION

Publications and resources

- [Helvetas Advocacy on the Helvetas Webpage](#)
- [Helvetas Advocacy Toolbox](#)
- [Guidance Paper: Advocating through the United Nations Human Rights System](#)
- [Guidance Paper: Advocating through the European Human Rights System](#)

Learn more about our work

- [Voice, Inclusion and Cohesion](#), including [Governance and Civic Space](#); [Migration](#); and [Conflict Transformation](#)
- [Gender and Social Equity](#)
- [Partnership and Capacity Development](#)

OUR EXPERTS

Our professional, committed and multilingual advisors within our Voice, Inclusion and Cohesion team have extensive experience in advocacy and policy dialogue in multiple contexts and at different levels.



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WHAT WE CAN OFFER

- Capacity strengthening for advocacy and policy dialogue through interactive face-to-face, hybrid or online workshops and training courses
- Participatory, inclusive design, implementation, adaptation and evaluation of advocacy strategies
- Process and technical support for targeted and systematic engagement with international mechanisms for human rights advocacy
- Partnerships on consortia, joint bidding and joint project implementation

SELECTED PARTNERSHIPS, ALLIANCES AND NETWORKS

