



A Rohingya refugee woman at a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. © Helvetas

WORKING WITH FORCIBLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

The number of forcibly displaced people is rising, and protracted crises are becoming more common, underscoring the need for long-term solutions. Helvetas focuses on ensuring access to inclusive services and strengthening self-reliance. Through emergency support, integration, and resilience building, we protect and empower displaced populations and host communities while adopting a nexus approach for sustainable impact.

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 affiliated organizations in the U.S. and Germany. Helvetas is committed to a just world in which all people determine the course of their lives in dignity and security, using environmental resources in a sustainable manner. We support underserved and marginalized people and communities, including migrants and forcibly displaced people, in over 35 partner countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe and the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region.

HOW WE WORK

Helvetas' work centers around three working areas: skills, jobs and income; water, food and climate; and voice, inclusion and cohesion. We work in development, humanitarian and nexus contexts. The impact of our work is the product of a three-pronged approach: systemic interventions and projects, innovative and contextualized thematic and methodological advisory services, and strategic policy dialogue at the local, regional and international levels. We are committed to an equitable partnership approach, seeking to understand the local context and to work in collaboration with multiple stakeholders for sustainable localized solutions.

FORCED DISPLACEMENT: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Definitions and trends

The number of forcibly displaced persons has doubled in the last 10 years to reach **117.3 million in 2023, half of whom were female**, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) [Global Trends Report 2023](#). This includes 68.3 million **people internally displaced** by conflict, 37.6 million **refugees**, 6.9 million **asylum seekers**, and 5.8 million **in need of international protection**. Disasters like floods and storms displaced an additional 7.7 million people within their countries. Children, who make up 30% of the global population, account for 40% of displaced individuals. 75% of refugees and people in need of international protection are hosted in low and middle-income countries, and 69% reside in neighboring countries.

Forcibly displaced people face significant challenges, including: loss of homes, property, and livelihoods; trauma; family separation; and limited or nonexistent access to basic services like food, water and healthcare. Vulnerable groups, such as women, children and the elderly, face heightened risks of exploitation and abuse. These individuals also often experience poverty, discrimination and barriers to education, employment and social services in the places of transit or destination due in particular to the absence or the loss of documents and insufficiently inclusive policies or services.

While immediate humanitarian assistance focuses on life-saving measures, protracted crises highlight the need for long-term solutions aimed at resilience, socio-economic integration and social cohesion. Despite

According to the [Inter-Agency Standing Committee \(IASC\)](#), **durable solutions to displacement** are achieved when displaced people "no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement."

International Organization for Migration definition of displacement:

The movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters.

concerted efforts to take collective action and the progress made, **durable solutions, which traditionally include return and reintegration, as well as local integration and resettlement, are nevertheless still out of reach for the vast majority of displaced people**. These populations generally keep facing multiple obstacles and difficulties in rebuilding their lives and securing a stable future in their new destinations or back in their places of origin.

HELVETAS' SUPPORT TO FORCIBLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

Helvetas aligns with Agenda 2030's "leave no one behind" commitment by prioritizing support for forcibly displaced populations. Beyond addressing their vulnerabilities and needs, Helvetas recognizes their potential, skills and aspirations as integral to designing and implementing responses.

Helvetas' interventions include:

- Providing emergency relief and facilitating access to basic services (shelter, food, water, etc.).
- Facilitating access to education, vocational training and employment.
- Supporting entrepreneurship and business development.
- Enabling access to assets as well as financial and non-financial services.
- Promoting social inclusion and cohesion between displaced people and host communities.
- Building capacity for organizations and governments to deliver inclusive services.
- Collaborating with diverse stakeholders (governments, NGOs, private sector, academia and media).
- Conducting data collection and analysis for informed programming, advocacy and policy dialogue.
- Advocating for policies and services addressing the needs of displaced populations.

Helvetas' approach aims to provide life-saving assistance, restore normality, build (self-) resilience and foster opportunities for displaced individuals as well as host communities to better cope with future crises and contribute to local social and economic development. This also enhances preparedness for return when conditions improve.

Helvetas' added value

- **Extensive local knowledge**, established relationships and networks with authorities, organizations and partners due to long-standing presence in crisis-affected areas
- **Dual mandate for development and humanitarian assistance**, allowing us to address acute needs as well as building resilience and perspectives, while strengthening social cohesion
- **Proven competence in strengthening economic self-reliance** for displaced populations and host communities through livelihoods support and economic resilience
- **Emphasis on sustainable, long-term solutions in protracted displacement**, transitioning from short-term projects to multi-year programs
- **Relevant thematic and cross-thematic expertise** of the advisory services department in support for forcibly displaced people, social cohesion and gender-responsive programming, including mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity, risk analysis and accountability to affected populations
- **Evidence-based approaches, research and advocacy** to address gaps in rights, services and policies for displaced populations
- **Strong relationships with key donors** such as BMZ, DANIDA, ECHO, OCHA, SDC, Swiss Solidarity, UNHCR and WFP

Our approach to supporting forcibly displaced populations

Context-related interventions

Helvetas works with all types of forcibly displaced people, as well as migrants in general, regardless of their status. A people-centered and context-specific approach is adopted to support displaced populations and host communities. By analyzing individual, collective and systemic needs, Helvetas also systematically integrates gender and social equity into its programming. The approach distinguishes between acute and protracted displacement contexts, ensuring tailored responses for immediate and long-term needs, and also taking into account the continuum and some overlap between the two. In this sense, we follow a nexus programming approach.

1) Acute Displacement Context – Core Humanitarian Programming

Focus: Address immediate needs, support recovery and prepare for future crises

Examples of activities:

- Emergency aid: cash, non-food items (NFIs), food assistance, immediate access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, and protection services, including mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)
- Early recovery: replacement of agricultural inputs, cash-for-work, infrastructure and services' repair, psychosocial support
- Preparedness/early action: risk analysis, contingency planning and pre-positioning resources

Most emergency and preparedness interventions occur in crisis-affected communities where displaced people are relocated, while early recovery efforts focus on communities of origin as displaced people return.

2) Protracted Displacement Context – Resilience Programming

Focus: Socio-economic integration through livelihoods, employment, self-employment and social cohesion for displaced populations and host communities.

Examples of activities:

- Skills development and job matching, entrepreneurship and market linkages
- Climate-resilient agriculture and livelihoods
- Access to drinking water and sanitation system
- Education in emergencies
- Integration and social cohesion initiatives

Activities are carried out in areas where displaced people stay or return. For each of the above, gender and social equity are integrated into the analysis.

Important considerations

Helvetas employs an **inclusive systems approach** by involving public, private and civil society actors. Sustainable change relies on local ownership, coordination and cooperation, ensuring stakeholders lead effective and quality responses.

Through **participatory processes and community-based approaches**, displaced individuals and local communities play active roles in planning and implementation, leveraging local knowledge and resources for sustainable solutions. We advocate for their participation in decision-making to address their needs and reduce the factors that can lead to further displacement.

Helvetas is committed to **equitable partnerships**, and collaborates with local partners and implements its interventions alongside them. By building their capacities, we contribute to a localized aid system where local actors lead responses for lasting impact.

To improve displaced populations' lives and framework conditions, Helvetas **strengthens civil society, government and private sector capacities** to better integrate migrants' needs into policies and programs, enhancing protection, service access and development opportunities.

Through networks and platforms, Helvetas drives policy change using **evidence-based advocacy**. In collaboration with academia and the media, among others, we collect reliable data to highlight challenges, needs and opportunities for displaced populations, countering false narratives with fact-based insights.

Impact in 2023

- In 2023, Helvetas reached more than **5,837,124 people** (of which approximately 2.8 million were women and 3 million were men) through projects and programs in **35 partner countries**, including 384,536 people in humanitarian contexts, with the majority being affected by displacement.
- Among all 280 projects implemented, **35 projects included forcibly displaced populations** in 16 countries.
- Around **two-thirds of the projects with forcibly displaced people involved IDPs** and were mainly implemented in African countries.
- The majority of forcibly displaced people benefited from support for **sustainable growth across economic and skills development sectors**, while over 40% of the projects included private sector engagement.

WHERE WE WORK WITH FORCIBLY DISPLACED PEOPLE



Projects with forcibly displaced populations



23 projects with IDPs in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Pakistan and Ukraine

Examples: [Skills for Reconstructing Rakhine \(S4RR\)](#), Myanmar (funded by the Livelihood and Food Security Trust Fund of UNOPS), [REFAUK: Repair Facilitation Ukraine](#) (Swiss Solidarity)



11 projects supporting refugees and people in need of international protection in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Jordan, Moldova, Pakistan and Poland

Examples: [20 Dunums for Change](#), Jordan (Agence Française de Développement), [Integrate – Economic empowerment of Venezuelan families](#), Bolivia (donations)



One regional project including mixed migration flows ([Enfants et Jeunes en Mobilité](#)), Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Niger and Tunisia (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation)

HELVETAS' PROJECT EXPERIENCE

ACHIEVING RESILIENCE THROUGH EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL COHESION – MOLDOVA

Funding	SDC
Key Partners	HEKS/EPER, Norwegian Refugee Council
Duration	2023-2025
Volume	CHF 3,75 mio

The project aims to facilitate the socio-economic integration of refugees and vulnerable individuals in Moldova, enabling them to achieve independence from humanitarian aid. By promoting resilience and self-reliance, it seeks to create sustainable solutions that lead to long-term positive outcomes for the affected population.



Photo exhibition of project activities at a graduation ceremony.

Key components of the project

- The project **improves employment opportunities, fostering economic independence for refugees and vulnerable Moldovans** through education, including language courses, soft skills training, TVET programs and entrepreneurship grants.
- Parents receive targeted support, **improving childcare access** through strengthened state services via in-kind assistance and infrastructure improvements.
- The project **strengthens the National Employment Agency** by providing staff training, developing a referral tool, and launching media campaigns to promote job services and income-generating opportunities.

- **Social cohesion** is promoted through events, dialogue forums, and micro-grants that empower communities to lead initiatives fostering resilience and conflict prevention.
- **Legal support** ensures equal rights by providing counseling, training and documentation assistance, fostering a more inclusive labor market.

Expected results

- 200 National Employment Agency and social assistance staff trained, and 100,000 people reached through awareness campaigns
- 19 state childcare facilities received in-kind supplies
- 400 people trained in TVET and language courses.
- 20 community-led response grants provided
- 72 social cohesion events organized

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF VULNERABLE AFGHAN COMMUNITIES (HRVAC) - PAKISTAN

Funding	ECHO
Consortium Partners	Handicap International (lead), Malteser International
Duration	2022-2024
Volume	Around CHF 3 million (EUR 3,225,850)

The project addresses both the immediate and chronic needs of Afghan refugees across six districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, providing health, education and protection services while enhancing the resilience of vulnerable communities facing hazards. Helvetas is responsible for the education in emergency component of the project. Children from Afghan families are enrolled in non-formal education (NFE) and public schools through bridging and catch-up programs.

A "surge model" approach ensures contingency planning for potential large-scale influxes. Additionally, NFE teachers receive training in psychosocial support and children with disabilities are equipped with assistive devices to ensure their full participation.



Afghan refugee children in a non-formal education center, Naguman Peshawar

Key components of the project

- The project **tackles socio-economic and political barriers**, with a strong emphasis on increasing school enrollment, especially for girls.
- Efforts to make NFE infrastructure as inclusive as possible have enabled the enrollment of 38 girls and 71 boys with disabilities.
- NFE and accelerated education programs **complement UNHCR schools, supporting refugee children in transitioning** to formal education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET).
- **Active engagement** of local communities through Parent-Teacher Councils (PTCs), the Education Department, as well as key stakeholders has been crucial in managing NFE centers effectively and ensuring the continuity of children's education.

Results

- 6,660 Afghan refugee children (3,660 girls and 3,000 boys), including 109 with disabilities, enrolled in NFE across 13 refugee settlements

- 40 Non-Formal Education Centers (NFECs) established and equipped with teaching, learning and sports material, benefitting over 10,000 children
- 70 teachers trained in education in emergencies, child protection and classroom management
- 85% of enrolled children successfully transitioned to the next grade in the formal education system

SAMRE AND SAHARTI RECOVERY PROJECT - ETHIOPIA

Funding	Swiss Solidarity
Key Partners	Samre Seharti cooperatives union
Duration	2023-2024
Volume	CHF 824,621

The project aims to support conflict-affected vulnerable households in the Samre and Saharti woredas of Tigray, helping them regain access to agricultural inputs and resume economic activities, while strengthening community-based organizations (CBOs). Key interventions include livestock restocking, revitalizing CBOs, training in climate-smart agriculture (CSA), providing improved and nutrition-focused crop varieties, promoting small-scale irrigation, and distributing seeds and cash grants to enhance resilience. Additionally, the project has empowered CBOs through micro-grants, fostering youth employment and economic reengagement and reducing reliance on negative coping mechanisms.



Restocking goats for conflict affected communities

Key components of the project

- The recovery support enabled communities to **resume their economic activities**.
- The project played a **vital role in addressing community trauma by fostering participation** in various activities.
- **Micro-grants** significantly boosted **youth engagement** in economic activities and promoted employment.
- The project helped **restore conflict-damaged institutions**, allowing them to resume serving the community.

Results

- 10,300 food-insecure farming households planted vegetable seeds in backyards or irrigated plots
- 10,397 food-insecure and conflict-affected farming households received crop seeds
- Micro-grants were provided to 50 community-based organizations, benefiting 750 members
- 50 Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs) comprised of 1,000 households and 22 civil society organizations received micro-grant support

ENFANTS ET JEUNES SUR LES ROUTES MIGRATOIRES (EJM) – NIGER, MALI, GUINEA, TUNISIA, MOROCCO

Funding	SDC
Consortium Partners	GIZ, Terre des hommes
Duration	2022-2025 (1st phase)
Volume	CHF 21,700,000

Helvetas coordinates the EJM regional project that aims to support children and youth along migration routes, including large numbers of forcibly displaced people, in west and northwest Africa. The goal is to ensure that pilot countries have and apply a normative framework and capacities to guarantee children and young people on the move (CYM) protection, access to education and vocational training, and to improve their opportunities for a dignified life.

EJM tests pilot approaches (community-based protection, inclusive education, MHPSS, migration route), including digital. These can be replicated and/or upscaled in future programs.



Mobilization meeting with youth migrants, Bamako (Mali)

Key components of the project

- The **voice and participation of CYM** is of paramount importance and promoted at various levels: bottom-up advocacy, project governance, inclusion into national strategic processes (e.g., laws and strategies), and participatory action research.
- The project aims to **integrate these populations into existing educational and vocational training systems**. An innovative conceptual framework has been developed to promote access to education and training in the context of mixed migration.

Expected results

- By the end of 2024, more than 50 protection structures had been reinforced and about 1,500 actors had improved their skills.
- EJM provides direct support to CYM for case management and protection, access to education and socio-economic opportunities, reaching about 30,000 by late 2024.
- The needs of CYM are increasingly integrated into national and local policies and strategic plans.

MORE INFORMATION

Resources

- [Helvetas' Migration Webpage \(including publications\)](#)
- [Helvetas Humanitarian Response](#)

Learn more about our work on

- [Voice, inclusion and cohesion](#), including [governance and civic space](#) and [conflict transformation](#)
- [Gender and Social Equity](#) and [Advocacy and Policy Dialogue](#)

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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Our core team is supported by colleagues in our partner countries and migration-related topic specialists on conflict, climate, human rights, policy dialogue, skills and education.

WHAT WE CAN OFFER

- Context, protection, policy and risk analyses
- Innovative and contextualized thematic advice on the topic of forced displacement
- Design, implementation, adaptation and review of strategies and projects
- Mainstreaming on protection and forced displacement in project cycle management
- Development of adapted methodological tools and manuals
- Process and network facilitation
- Capacity building through coaching, training courses and organizational development
- Peer learning, communities of practice and knowledge management
- Evidence-based policy dialogue
- Development of quality assurance and monitoring systems
- Designing and conducting project evaluations