



**International Geneva**  
**Directory of Swiss Global Health Actors**

**Helvetas**

<https://www.helvetas.org/it/svizzera>

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**BACKGROUND AND MISSION**

Helvetas, an international network of independent affiliate member organisations, is working in the fields of development cooperation and emergency response. Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation is a non-profit association working in development cooperation, anchored in Switzerland with a membership amongst the Swiss public. It is denominationally neutral and politically independent. Its vision is a just world in which all men and women determine the course of their lives in dignity and security, using environmental resources in a sustainable manner. Working with its partners, it supports the efforts of disadvantaged people and communities in developing countries. In Switzerland, it promotes a spirit of solidarity among the public and it campaigns for coherent policies that benefit people in developing countries. It supports poor and disadvantaged women, men and communities in developing and transition countries in their efforts to improve their living conditions. It actively engages in development policy dialogue seeking to influence international regulatory frameworks in a just manner, responsive to the demands of developing countries. It works with civil society organisations, private sector and government actors and promotes exchange among them at local, national and international levels, taking into account the local context.

Helvetas is active in five working areas: water and infrastructure, skills development and education, sustainable and inclusive economies, governance and peace and environment and climate change. Helvetas engages in emergency relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation. In addition to rural areas, Helvetas is increasingly involved in urban development and is focusing its work on young women and men. In Switzerland, Helvetas is structured as an association of 100,000 members and donors and has offices in Zürich, Bern, Geneva and Balerna.

**AREAS OF INTEREST**

- Water access, sanitation and hygiene
- Humanitarian aid
- Citizen governance and peace
- Access to health

**HEALTH-RELATED ACTIVITIES**

The most vulnerable communities of the world suffer from dirty and scarce water. Every year, Helvetas helps up to 500,000 people get new access to drinking water and basic sanitation. Helvetas places the human right to water and sanitation at the center of its work. It supports the poorest not only in their efforts to build wells and latrines. Helvetas promotes a

comprehensive approach that includes distributing water resources fairly, sustainably managing water supply services, efficiently irrigating fields, and improving hygiene practices. Its approach builds on local ownership and initiative, and tackles the root causes of problems related to water and sanitation, and not just symptoms.

Helvetas isn't only helping them to grow crops, acquire education, and build hospitals. Very often the problem is not the absence of crops, schools, and medical facilities. It is the access to them that is the challenge. Lack of bridges and roads means that children have to skip school, farmers lose crops to pests before they can access markets, and the sick visit a doctor when it's too late. Rural communities either have to risk their lives crossing rivers and gorges, or are stranded without access to vital resources and services.

### **GOVERNANCE AND STAFF**

Helvetas members elect the Board of Directors, which in turn appoints the management board. Together with the employees, they plan and implement Helvetas' projects. Helvetas is an association established under Swiss law. The highest body within Helvetas is the General Assembly, at which all association members have the right to vote. The General Assembly elects the Board of Directors and the president. The members of the Board of Directors come from the worlds of business, science, and politics. They advise Helvetas on strategic matters. They are 12 and currently Therese Frösch is serving as the president and Peter Niggli as the vice-president. The Management Board is responsible for implementing Helvetas' strategy and for the operational management of the organisation. Melchior Lengsfeld is the current Executive Director and he is supported by other 5 directors. The Advisory Board advises Helvetas on development policy issues. It comprises (predominantly) federal parliamentarians from a broad spectrum of parties. With 1600 collaborators in about 30 countries, of whom 1400 are national staff, the network members share a common vision and mission and subscribe to common working principles and policies.

### **FUNDING SOURCES AND BUDGET**

The 2018 financial accounts show higher revenues compared to the previous year. Total revenues amounted to CHF 132.3 million, and spending totalled CHF 134.6 million. Regarding the source of funds, 48% is from a public source (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), while the remaining from fundraising (22.7%), project funding from organisations (22.8%) and other sources for the remaining part. Most of them (apart from a 3.6% for head office and 5.6% for fundraising) were used directly for projects (69.5%) or advisory services and fair trade for the missing part.

### **PUBLICATIONS**

Publications can be accessed at <https://www.helvetas.org/en/switzerland/who-we-are/publications> for annual reports, position statements and other relevant documents regarding projects and strategy.

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