



CREATING LOCAL EXPERTISE, STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION, ENHANCING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF ACTIONS

Our experience with Labor-Based Approaches in Burkina Faso

Since 2003, Helvetas has been contributing to the local development in Burkina Faso by realizing infrastructure using a Labor-Based Approach. This approach, while maintaining cost competitiveness and acceptable quality standards, maximizes opportunities for the employment of the local workforce (skilled and unskilled), the use of light equipment, and locally available materials. This method has been gradually complemented with a growing involvement of local authorities and communities in the entire process of infrastructure development. Municipalities and regional councils together with the local people identify needs, and then

plan and implement the prioritized construction work. This approach has been successfully used, especially with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, to build rural roads and urban sanitation infrastructure and to manage land for rice cultivation, market gardening and livestock. The benefits go beyond the immediate use of the infrastructure and positively impact the lives of women and men in villages and towns on several dimensions.

[Learn more about the programme](#)

CREATING LOCAL EXPERTISE



Helvetas emphasizes the use of local workforce in order to create decent jobs and opportunities to earn a revenue.

Training of local masons

Masons in villages close to the planned roads are involved in the construction. They are trained to strengthen their basic skills and develop additional expertise in the construction of rural roads. Thus, after the implementation of the project, they are better equipped to continue working for regional public work companies, or even those in neighboring regions.

'Training construction sites' to create local expertise

As part of the process of employing local labor and expertise, 'training construction sites' are set-up, where participants (companies, engineering offices, local masons) can reinforce key competences through theoretical and practical training. It also presents the youth and women with new business and employment opportunities related to the construction of rural roads; such as masonry, supplying of local materials, or placing of stone barriers. In several municipalities where Helvetas has intervened, people benefited from trainings during the implementation of labor-based projects, and were later recruited for the maintenance or the rehabilitation of local infrastructure.

More opportunities for local businesses

Helvetas has set up a directory of service providers in Civil Engineering, Construction and Public Works who have acquired skills and experience in the Labor-Based Approach. This directory provides a platform for

the local companies, whereby they can be consulted and engaged by Helvetas partners, other organizations and development agencies in different projects. This strengthens the role of the private sector in local development and job creation.

I was trained in the Labor-Based Approach and in business organization and management in 2016. I was then awarded a contract to build 9 km of rural roads, which I completed on time - thanks to the training and the support I received from Helvetas. Now my company is better organized, and I am working on other contracts at the national and even international level.

*Ms Téné Kalkondo Coulibaly,
executive director of FAGES (SME of public works)*

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION

Since 2016, the security situation in Burkina Faso has been deteriorating due to a growing number of attacks by armed opposition groups and the emergence of community conflicts. Therefore, the strengthening of social cohesion is essential; not only to ensure effective infrastructure project implementation, but also to guarantee inclusive and lasting impact. Tools such as social facilitation and conflict-sensitive project management, help to foster peaceful coexistence within and among communities.

Preventing and managing conflicts

Social facilitation is a tool for participatory appraisal and community mobilization. A series of interventions are carried out before, during and after the construction of the infrastructure. Awareness-raising sessions, workshops, community meetings with local elected officials, negotiations with landowners, are among the tools that allow to:

- raise the awareness of local authorities and communities on their roles and responsibilities in the realization of infrastructure
- train all actors on cross-cutting themes such as equity, governance, citizenship, and community participation
- ensure the mobilization of local labor, local businesses and other village organizations
- prevent or manage conflicts related to the execution of work

Empowering communities

Social facilitation encourages communities to support the entire process of constructing and maintaining roads in order to ensure the sustainability of the investments.

Inhabitants are involved in the decisions concerning planning, realization, management, and maintenance of the required infrastructures. Helvetas facilitates the dialogue between local communities and authorities to strengthen citizen participation, particularly of youth and women, and to enhance community ownership of the infrastructures and their maintenance.

Gender and social inclusion

The specific interests and needs of men, women and the most vulnerable groups of the population are taken into account throughout the process of implementing a labor-based project. Thanks to awareness meetings, women understand that they can work and earn money, just like men, and contribute to the well-being of their families. Helvetas encourages female managers of construction and public works companies to bid for contracts, and offers specific training courses on the labor-based method so that they can strengthen their skills, inspire confidence, and influence other women.

« Social facilitation is an extremely valuable mechanism for the municipality. Thanks to the permanent presence of facilitators and municipal authorities in the field, and the constant involvement of the population, we can guarantee an effective management of all aspects of labor-based interventions.

Bazoin Bado, mayor of Kordie municipality, Centre-West Region



Impact of the Labor-Based Approach in the first half of 2020*

More than **40,000** people (**53 %** women) have had access to key basic services (schools, health centers, markets) - thanks to the construction of rural roads.

6,693 people were employed as local workforce. Women constituted **65 %**.

More than 135 millions FCFA (**250,000 USD**) was paid out as remuneration to the local workforce.

18 village roads committees have been set up, recognized by municipal ordinance and trained in the maintenance of labor-based infrastructure.

*Data concerning Programme d'Appui à la Décentralisation et à la Participation Citoyenne (DEPAC)

ENHANCING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF ACTIONS



The implementation of labor-based projects represents an opportunity that goes beyond the immediate benefits of the different infrastructures realized. Our approach places a strong emphasis on empowering local authorities, populations and the private sector to ensure that the skills acquired are used for the development of the community.

Local project management

Helvetas' vision is to assist the local partners so that they can fully assume their roles and responsibilities. It is the local authorities and communities that identify, prioritize, and implement the activities related to the construction of the infrastructures according to their development plans – and Helvetas supports the regional authorities in the process of awarding contracts and selecting the companies responsible for carrying out the construction work.

Through participation in the construction work, the communities acquire the skills needed to ensure the long-term maintenance of the infrastructure.

To this purpose, village road committees are created and trained to monitor the condition of the infrastructure and to organize long-term maintenance.

Networking

To strengthen the capacities of public authorities and communities to take over the management of the various infrastructures and to better plan future interventions, Helvetas promotes collaboration between the public and the private sectors (engineering and construction companies, suppliers etc.) and between local masons and larger construction companies. A directory of all actors is compiled and shared with all stakeholders involved in the various implementation processes, so that existing expertise can be valued and put to scale.

Raising awareness on savings and income-generating activities

During training sessions for the workforce and local committees, the issue of savings and the development of income-generating activities is widely discussed. The objective is to orient participants towards investing their earned money in economic activities that offer long-term opportunities.

Given the low penetration rate of the banking system, this also incentivizes private micro-finance institutions to engage in rural areas and contributes to the strengthening of the local economy.

Environmental protection and opportunities in agriculture

Our Labor-Based Approach takes full advantage of road constructions to improve the retention of runoff water and thus increase the potential for irrigation and agricultural activities along roads, to control soil erosion, to reduce dust through the reforestation of borders, and to strengthen flood resistance. Helvetas ensures that all technical studies are accompanied by an environmental and social impact assessment, and a corresponding management plan. In this way that the agro-ecological potential of the investments can be exploited, and their benefits multiplied.

The water crossing constructions built by the communities help to stop the erosion caused by water runoffs from upstream fields. The retained water can be exploited, most notably by women for off-season gardening. Helvetas incentivizes women to take advantage of these opportunities after the end of the project as well, and to reinvest their revenues from gardening into the further development of their activities.