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## CLIMATE JUSTICE

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

Helvetas pursues three main goals: **ensuring basic rights, creating new perspectives and strengthening good governance.** To achieve these goals, we work across three areas: Water, Food and Climate; Skills, Jobs and Income; and Voice, Inclusion and Cohesion.

**Climate change and building resilience** is one working field Helvetas has been engaged in over the last two decades. We support the most disadvantaged women and men to adapt to climate change, plan for the long-term and make risk-informed decisions, and access climate finance. As an implementing organization putting people at the center of our work, **climate justice is part of a unifying rights-based frame within which Helvetas acts, empowers its partners and advocates for a fairer world.** At the same time, we support communities who are already affected and suffering disproportionately from the effects of climate change (e.g., losing their land, livelihoods or houses, and are forced to migrate). The climate change crisis starkly exposes and exacerbates already existing social, financial and political injustices. Advocating and addressing climate justice in our projects is hence a direct response to peoples' needs on the ground.

At Helvetas, we try to respond to all aspects of climate justice – procedural, distributive and transformative. **Procedural climate justice** emphasizes fair, transparent and inclusive decision making. **Distributive justice** places the emphasis on who bears the costs of both climate change and the actions taken to address it. A more recent concept, **transformative justice**, focuses on how vulnerability to climate change reflects various structural injustices in society, such as the exclusion of marginalized groups from decision making and from climate-resilient livelihoods; it seeks to orient climate action to explicitly address these structural power imbalances.

**Climate injustice plays out at least at three levels:** inequity across nations in their level of responsibility for anthropogenic climate change and the capability to deal with its consequences; inequities within countries – between the rich with their large carbon footprint, and for the poor, between men and women; and finally, inter-generational inequity between current and past generations who have benefited from fossil fuel-driven economic growth and quality of life and future generations who will have fewer development options. The impact that a transition to a Green (Circular) Economy would have on several economic sectors and its implications on workers employed in those sectors is a further area of concern.

Labor unions across the world are arguing for a “just transition” that is fair and inclusive of the workers who are often themselves economically vulnerable and exposed to many environmental hazards. Just transitions would include fair treatment of workers, their re-skilling, and regional redevelopment plans that trigger new economic activities and growth in areas adversely affected by the phasing out of fossil fuel-based economic activities.

In short, contributing towards climate justice requires an integrated thematic approach, with attention for social, political and financial components in ensuring basic rights, creating new perspectives and strengthening good governance.

In pursuit of climate justice, Helvetas proposes an analytical framework along three dimensions of climate justice: **financial, political and social**. Such a framework prompts us to design, implement, monitor, evaluate and learn from interconnected interventions at local, national and international levels, and move towards more holistic programming on climate justice.

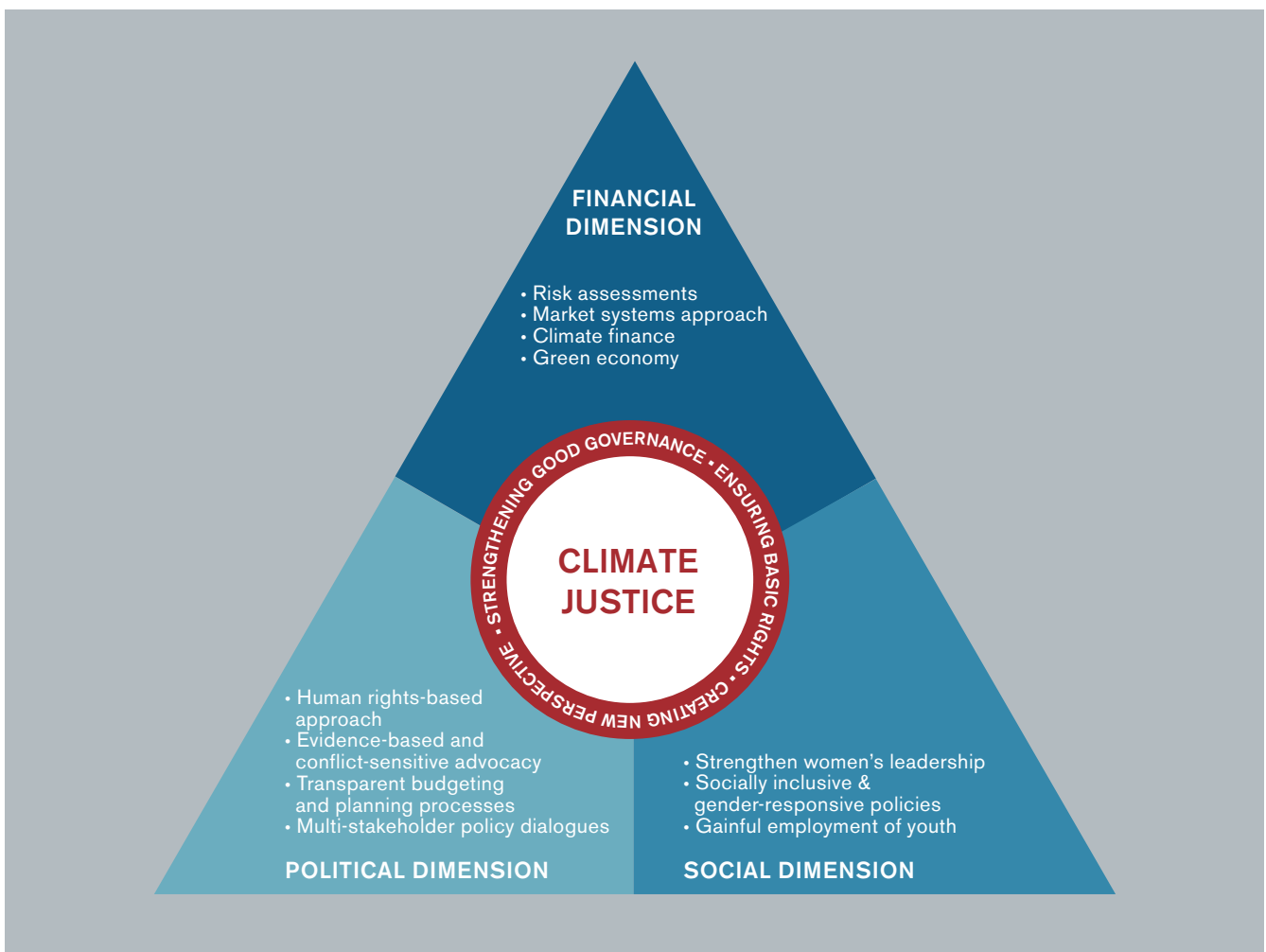


Figure 1: Helvetas' Response towards Climate Justice.

### Financial Dimension

From a financial point of view, climate justice requires that the costs associated with climate change are internalized. This raises two fundamental questions: 1) who needs to pay and act? and 2) who should receive those payments? These questions put the notion of climate finance in the center of the discussion. Climate finance refers to public or private sources of financing that seeks to support mitigation and adaptation actions that will address climate change. The amount of climate finance

that developed countries must transfer to developing countries is therefore a factor of historical and ongoing emissions and the inequity between those who caused climate change, those who are impacted most by it, and their respective capacities.

A step in 'polluter pays' efforts was the **COP 15 Accord made in Copenhagen in 2009**, in which developed country parties committed to jointly mobilize USD 100 billion per year by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries. It is still being disputed whether this target has been met, since it has not been defined what can count towards its achievement. What is indisputable is that the amounts already achieved represent only a fraction of what is needed to allow developing countries to meet their adaptation needs and mitigation targets. Moreover, experiences have shown that the global climate finance

### Supporting National and Local Actors to Access Climate Finance

The Andes form one of the longest mountain ranges in the world, and its rural population is one of the most vulnerable to the adverse impacts and challenges of climate change. The regional project **Andes Resilientes al Cambio Climático**, financed by SDC and implemented by a consortium of Helvetas and Fundación AVINA, contributes to the resilience and capacity to adapt to climate change of women and men in poor and vulnerable rural Andean communities in Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru. It focuses on improving their food and water security, in coordination with public and private actors at various levels.

Supporting national and local actors to access climate finance is one of the key actions under the regional initiative. For instance, the project supports the development of regional programs and projects for financial support from climate funds such as the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund. The development of regional proposals, in alignment with the governments' climate strategies, is a resource and time-intensive process. While these barriers can be partially tackled through partnerships with accredited entities or using development funds (ODA), it is also important to broaden the set of activities that enhance access to finance in the region. One approach is to strengthen the role of the microfinance sector in investing in adaptation solutions to families and farmers. This requires an enabling policy environment.

Furthermore, awareness raising is a key challenge. On the demand side, people have very little understanding of the risks from climate change and ways to deal with them. Simultaneously, the supply side is underdeveloped. There is limited availability of financial service pro-

viders that understand how to play a role in building the long-term financial resilience of communities. Through multi-stakeholder and -sectoral approaches, close collaboration with national and subnational government entities, alignment with global initiatives (e.g., NDC Partnership, NAP Global Network), the project aims to leverage a fair distribution of financial resources so that they reach the most vulnerable populations.

Another example of strengthening local-level decision-making processes for climate finance is the **Local Government Initiatives on Climate Change** (LoGIC) project in Bangladesh, implemented with UNDP. Helvetas facilitated a process whereby climate change and disaster risk reduction were integrated into local development planning processes. Climate vulnerable districts were supported to access their fair share of climate finance received by the national government.



Women in the Andean region of Bolivia claiming their rights to access climate finance

architecture is not designed to balance adaptation and mitigation needs, nor to reach the most vulnerable. A further milestone was the ‘**Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage**’ that was set up at COP 19, to “address loss and damage associated with impacts of climate change, including extreme events and slow-onset events in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change”.

Aiming at vulnerable communities and regions, Helvetas designs and implements projects with a clear focus on addressing and reducing climate risks, and enhancing the adaptive capacities of people and institutions. **Integrated risk management** is a useful approach to contribute to resilience building by adapting to climate change, limiting disaster risks, reducing poverty and improving livelihoods. We aim to factor climate change considerations in the design and implementation of our projects and to ensure climate-resilient development of the communities with which we work. We use a **systemic approach** in project implementation to reach sustainable impact on scale. **Country ownership** is a core principle we adhere to, and we support decision making at the national and subnational level on project design and implementation.

At the **local level**, we work with the most vulnerable populations in disaster-prone areas. Promoted financing schemes seek to attract private sector finance to scale-up climate-resilient technologies (e.g., using drought-resistant crops or increasing water efficiency). Our focus is on interventions that work with multiple stakeholders, inducing transformative changes. We work to strengthen local actors and foster private investments in climate activities, especially in adaptation.

At the **national level**, we work closely with national government departments including agriculture, fisheries, forests, infrastructure, environment, finance and planning, labor and employment in partner countries to develop and implement projects that respond to the needs of the most vulnerable populations and ecosystems. Our climate change interventions aim to build and strengthen the ability of our partner countries to integrate climate change responses into national development processes and to reach the commitments made in their Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement and in National Adaptation Plans.

At the **international level**, we advocate for the development of a conducive policy environment for the participatory and equitable management of natural resources and for addressing climate change in our partner countries, at the international level and/or in Switzerland, typically in partnership or alliances with other organizations. We advocate for the ‘polluter pays’ principle, which holds that the industrialized countries and large corporations that profited for decades from burning fossil fuels are respon-

sible for their historic and current contribution to climate change. A second demand is that climate finance is not increased at the expense of ODA. A third is that at least 50% of climate finance is for adaptation. We recognize Loss and Damage as another mechanism for both distributive and transformative justice, since delayed mitigation action is already leading to displacements and loss of lives and livelihoods among the most climate-vulnerable communities.

## Political Dimension

Anchored in international human rights frameworks and standards, the **Human Rights-Based Approach** is at the core of the political dimension of climate justice, as it links climate injustices to violations and/or non-fulfillment of specific rights. This includes CO<sub>2</sub> mitigation commitments such as the Kyoto and Paris agreements; food security and nutrition; water; education; gainful employment; access to information; freedom of expression, opinion and inclusive participation. In practice, this means that we support vulnerable communities and civil society to be empowered **to represent their interests, to have a voice, and through individual and collective action to protect, promote and demand climate justice** by engaging in multi-stakeholder decision- and policy-making processes at the local, national and international levels.

Through our work in country programs, Helvetas and our partners in the South are witnessing first-hand how **climate injustices are deepening socio-economic inequalities**. Civic spaces for formal decision and policy making are shrinking and are undermined by powerful actors with vested interests and perverse incentives to inhibit climate justice and transformative change. We therefore make use of **political economy and power analysis** to build and continuously validate the theories of change of our programs and projects.

At the **local level**, we apply the human rights-based approach to inclusive governance processes. These include climate-responsive planning and budgeting of public-private services; monitoring of public-private services and tracking of climate change funds and budgets; **evidence-based advocacy** on access to water, land and forestry resources; and interlinked municipal/district-provincial/regional policy dialogue on climate just development strategies. In all these processes, women’s political empowerment is a key focus of Helvetas (see the example of the Mother’s Parliament in Bangladesh).

At the **national level**, we aspire to facilitate alliance building between civil society organizations and like-minded progressive actors from the private sector and academia; share knowledge and learning for possible replication and upscaling of good practices; enable multi-stakeholder policy dialogue on climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies.

At the **international level**, jointly with strategic partners we advocate for participatory, transparent and effective climate governance processes that expand the participation of least developed countries in the negotiations around issues of climate justice and climate financing. We also support and engage in global alliances for climate justice.

## Social Dimension

**Climate change disproportionately impacts those with less power.** The injustice herein lies in the fact that these individuals and communities have contributed the least to climate change and who have the least resources to deal with it: women, youth, elderly, ethnic minorities, indigenous people and differently abled are more at risk and have less access to social services that could increase their resilience.

Linked to the political dimension, there is a high probability that non-inclusive governance processes that are devoid of climate actions end up reinforcing existing inequalities and regressive social structures and traditional norms.

### Taking Space, Raising your Voice

The **Mother's Parliament in Bangladesh** is a forum where women dialogue with local governments for their right to adequate resource allocation for their most pressing need: access to water services that are resilient to the impacts of climate change in the region, such as more frequent and intense floods.

Helvetas, together with the local NGO DORP (Development Organization of the Rural Poor), has been working in the southwestern coastal delta of Bangladesh since 2017. The **Panii Jibon** "Water is Life" project addresses water-related vulnerabilities in the context of climate change, supports local partners to develop climate-resilient solutions, and encourages them to work with local governments, ensuring that women are empowered to claim their rights. The Mother's Parliament has nine elected members who advocate for increased budget allocation for implementation of suitable and affordable water sources that meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in the region. The initiative is an example of challenging conventional approaches to public finance management and empowering the excluded population to negotiate and claim their rights.

A systematic vulnerability analysis leads the community to identify, question, challenge and address the root causes of inequalities.

"See, we, the women have hardly any room to share our thoughts, our choices and preferences; neither at home nor outside," says Mosammat Sufia Khatun, the Speaker of Mother's Parliament from Morrelganj, Bagerhat in Bangladesh. "We have grown up in a culture and practice of 'unjust' decision making processes which have been almost 'normal' in our work and life. This situation

has become worse in the context of climate change as we, the women, despite being affected disproportionately, have limited space when it comes to climate change adaptation planning and concrete action on the ground. Men are usually observed to take all the decisions – it is strongly embedded and rooted in our patriarchal society and reflected in our political culture."

Despite the growing strength of the Mother's Parliament, its social acceptance is still challenged. Often the members are questioned about their presence in meetings by senior government officials. But there are signs of change, too. The Mother's Parliament is invited to meetings by the local administration, given space in decision making, and accountability is practiced in their daily lives. This is a good example of **procedural justice**, moving towards **distributive justice** as developmental resources are more fairly allocated. By challenging social norms, there is also a move towards **transformative justice**.



The representative of the Mother's Parliament.

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At Helvetas, we follow a **gender-sensitive approach in climate change project interventions**. In patriarchal societies, women's livelihoods are particularly dependent on natural resources that are threatened by climate change. The fact that women often have less access to land and resources underscores women's vulnerability even further. Yet women also have less access to information and climate-resilient public-private services and technologies. Women who are empowered, self-confident and have a voice to meaningfully engage in and take up leadership in community development and local government institutions are therefore pivotal for the advancement of social service provision. Helvetas **focuses on women's leadership as a core approach towards socially inclusive and gender-responsive climate policies and actions**. This also implies that men and patriarchal communities at large recognize that climate change exacerbates women's (and girls) care work; that

both redistribution of house chores within the family and community as well as improved social service provision is a prerequisite for increasing women's choice in leisure time and taking up paid work; and the ability to engage in community development and leadership.

In the same vein, youth leadership and **intergenerational climate just approaches** are a priority for Helvetas so that future generations have a better range of options and resources available to them. Part of the intergenerational approach is youth exchanging with grandparents, sharing good – often indigenous – practices to preserve nature and alternative models countering excess extraction and overconsumption of natural resources. Instead, efforts are made towards preservation of already scarce resources and the promotion of **green economies and gainful employment** of youth in e.g., agri-businesses and green-tech sectors.

## Conflict-sensitive Solutions to Strengthen Climate Resilience

In Ethiopia, Helvetas supports climate-affected communities, local councils and institutions to sustainably manage natural resources to improve the food and nutrition security and resilience of pastoralists in five districts in the Borana zone. Over the past two decades, pasture productivity has dwindled, mainly due to advancing bush encroachment, overgrazing, soil erosion, demographic pressure, recurrent drought and the weakening of traditional rangeland management systems. As a climate-smart and conflict-sensitive solution, the **Borana Natural Resource Management project** is facilitating inclusive governance processes whereby pastoralists demand, and hold local and customary institutions to account for the rehabilitation and improvement of rangelands.

Similarly, in the northern provinces of Vietnam, climate change, combined with rapid industrialization and population growth, is putting high pressure on land and natural resources. While ethnic minorities represent 15% of the population, they account for 53% of the country's poor. They rely on land-based activities and customary land rights render them vulnerable to malpractices. Through the project **Secure Land Rights for All – Giving Ethnic Minorities a Voice**, Helvetas supports Land Alliances and Commune Mediation Committees to empower marginalized communities, particularly women, to meaningfully engage in local governance processes to claim their land and forest rights. Conflict-sensitive and participatory approaches help in establishing sustainable forest management practices in mountain areas. People learn from each other's best practices to manage fragile ecosystems that are increasingly affect-

ed by a changing climate. While this enhances the climate resilience of a marginalized group in very practical and concrete ways, it also strengthens mechanisms for **procedural justice**.



Pastoralist in Borana, Ethiopia, is sharing his invaluable knowledge on community-based resource management



**1 Panii Jibon – Water is Life  
Bangladesh**

Strengthening the capacities of public and private actors and climate-vulnerable communities living at the south-west coast of Bangladesh and hence contributing to climate resilience and climate justice on the ground

**2 The Borana Natural Resource Management Project  
Ethiopia**

Facilitating inclusive governance processes for pastoralists to hold local and customary institutions to account for increased access to pasture and water resources from rehabilitated and improved rangelands

**3 Secure Land Rights for All – Giving Ethnic Minorities a Voice  
Vietnam**

Contributing to the effective promotion and protection of land and forest resource rights of ethnic minorities

**4 Andes Resilientes al Cambio Climático  
Andes Regional Project**

Increasing the resilience of the poor and vulnerable rural Andean communities in Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru, focusing on improving their food and water security, in coordination with public and private actors at various levels

**5 Local Government Initiatives on Climate Change (LOGIC)  
Bangladesh**

Enhancing the capacity of vulnerable communities, local government institutions and civil society organizations for planning and financing climate change adaptation in climate vulnerable areas

Advocating and addressing **climate justice** is a direct response to the people's needs on the ground and is part of the climate advocacy strategy of Helvetas.

**We are advocating for a climate just world** that needs to consider the following:

- To counter climate injustices and unequal power relations at all levels, decision makers should use **inclusive participatory approaches**. The voices from the most climate-affected communities are heard, represented and protected adequately in key institutions. The needs of the most climate-vulnerable people, especially women and youth, including from indigenous/ethnic and other minority groups, need to be better addressed.
- Stakeholders should be empowered to lead **locally led adaptation** and get decision-making power over how adaptation actions are defined, prioritized, designed and implemented. Devolving power to local actors should then lead to longer-term and more effective adaptation outcomes. In this context, Helvetas has recently joined the **Locally Led Adaptation Principles**, which includes a commitment to directly finance local actors to invest in their own priorities. To date, over 40 government agencies and other entities across the globe have endorsed the principles.
- Global climate finance should reach communities on the front lines of climate change, match the investment needs, and be additional to ODA; in short, **transparent and consistent commitment of climate finance** is needed. Industrialized countries should be held responsible for their historic contribution to climate change and make a transparent and consistent commitment that should exceed USD 100 billion per year. Also, the share of funding between adaptation and mitigation should be better balanced (at least 50% to adaptation) and should reach the most vulnerable populations.



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