



**GREEN  
CLIMATE  
FUND**

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# Consideration of accreditation proposals and activities – Addendum VIII

## Accreditation assessment of APL180

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### **Summary**

This document contains the accreditation assessment conducted by the Secretariat and the Accreditation Panel in accordance with decision B.31/06 and the transitional arrangements in respect of the revised accreditation framework adopted in decision B.42/13 paragraph (m) and set out in annex VI to that decision, and the recommendation by the Accreditation Panel for accreditation of applicant 180 (APL180), HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (Helvetas), based in Switzerland.

## I. Introduction

1. HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (Helvetas) is an independent non-profit organization for development based in Switzerland. Helvetas actively contributes to providing fair opportunities and improving the living conditions of economically, socially and politically disadvantaged women, men and communities in about 35 developing and transition countries across Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Together with its local partners, Helvetas tackles global challenges at various levels: through projects on the ground, through expert advice and by advocating for policy frameworks that support disadvantaged groups. In its interventions, Helvetas follows a multi-stakeholder approach by linking together civil society actors, governments and the private sector.

2. The applicant submitted its application for accreditation to GCF via the online accreditation system on 7 September 2019. Accreditation fees were received from the applicant on 24 April 2020, thereby launching the Stage I institutional assessment and completeness check. Stage I was completed on 31 October 2025, and the applicant progressed to the Stage II (Step 1) accreditation review, which has been concluded with the publication of this assessment. The applicant has applied to be accredited for the following parameters under the GCF fit-for-purpose approach:<sup>1</sup>

- (a) **Access modality:** international access;
- (b) **Track:** normal track;
- (c) **Maximum size of an individual project or programme:** small;<sup>2</sup>
- (d) **Fiduciary functions:**<sup>3</sup>
  - (i) Basic fiduciary standards;
  - (ii) Specialized fiduciary standard for project management;
  - (iii) Specialized fiduciary standard for grant award and/or funding allocation mechanisms;
- (e) **Maximum environmental and social risk category:** medium risk (category B/intermediation 2 (I-2));<sup>4</sup>
- (f) Indicative result areas for intended projects/programmes with GCF:
  - (i) Energy generation and access;
  - (ii) Buildings, cities, industries and appliances;

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to section 4.2 below for the scope of accreditation recommended by the Accreditation Panel.

<sup>2</sup> As per annex III to decision B.31/06, "small" is defined as "maximum total projected costs at the time of application, irrespective of the portion that is funded by GCF, of above USD 10 million and up to and including USD 50 million for an individual project or programme".

<sup>3</sup> Decision B.07/02.

<sup>4</sup> As per the revised Environmental and Social Policy, adopted in decision B.BM-2021/18, category B is defined as "Activities with potential limited adverse environmental and/or social risks and impacts that individually or cumulatively, are few, generally site-specific, largely reversible, and readily addressed through mitigation measures" and intermediation 2 is defined as "When an intermediary's existing or proposed portfolio includes, or is expected to include, substantial financial exposure to activities with potential limited adverse environmental or social risks and impacts that are few, generally site-specific, largely reversible, and readily addressed through mitigation measures; and includes no activities with potential significant adverse environmental and social risks and impacts that, individually or cumulatively, are diverse, irreversible, or unprecedented."

- (iii) Forests and land use;
- (iv) Livelihoods of people and communities;
- (v) Health, food and water security;
- (vi) Infrastructure and built environment; and
- (vii) Ecosystems and ecosystem services; as well as
- (viii) Public, private and cross-cutting types of projects/programmes.

## II. Stage I institutional assessment and completeness check

3. The applicant applied and was assessed by the Secretariat during stage I under the normal track accreditation process in accordance with the following GCF policies and standards to the extent applicable to accreditation:

- (a) Updated Strategic Plan for the Green Climate Fund: 2020–2023 (decision B.27/06);
- (b) Updated Strategic Plan for the GCF 2024–2027 (decision B.36/13);
- (c) Updates to the accreditation framework (decision B.31/06);
- (d) Guidelines for the Operationalization of the Fit-for-purpose Accreditation Approach (decision B.08/02);
- (e) Policy on Prohibited Practices (decision B.22/19);
- (f) Anti-Money-Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Policy (AML/CFT Policy) (decision B.18/10);
- (g) Policy on the Protection of Whistleblowers and Witnesses (decision B.BM-2018/21);
- (h) Comprehensive Information Disclosure Policy of the Fund (decision B.12/35) regarding the disclosure of environmental and social (E&S) information;
- (i) Updated Gender Policy and Gender Action Plan 2020–2023 (decision B.24/12);
- (j) Revised Environmental and Social Policy (decision B.BM-2021/18); and
- (k) Evaluation Policy for the GCF (decision B.BM-2021/07).

### 2.1 Legal status, registration, permits and licences

4. The applicant provided documents on its establishment and licences to operate, where relevant, as a part of the application. HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation was formed as an association under the Swiss Civil Code and registered in the canton of Zurich on 27 May 1991, originally under the name of Helvetas, Swiss Society for Development and Cooperation, and has company number CHE-105.834.763. Helvetas has been known as “HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation” since 2011, when the articles of association were updated to reflect the merger of Helvetas and the Foundation Intercooperation.

5. The applicant has indicated and provided evidence that it has independent legal personality and legal capacity to enter into legal arrangements directly with GCF. In accordance with the transitional arrangements in respect of the revised accreditation framework adopted in decision B.42/13 paragraph (m) and set out in annex VI to that decision, if approved, the applicant's accreditation will be deemed to be complete on the date that GCF issues a confirmation/certificate evidencing the applicant's accreditation.

## 2.2 Institutional presence and relevant networks

6. The applicant is headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland. Additionally, it maintains country programme and project offices staffed by national and international professionals. Helvetas currently employs 180 staff in Switzerland and around 1,500 staff in its programme and project offices in about 35 countries.

7. Helvetas combines three mutually reinforcing intervention mechanisms. Firstly, Helvetas implements long-term development programmes and provides humanitarian response in about 35 partner countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. These include over 300 donor- and Helvetas-funded development and humanitarian projects. Secondly, Helvetas provides short- and long-term advisory services – related to process and various thematic areas such as project cycle management (PCM), process facilitation, capacity development, thematic analysis, and the development of tools and methodologies – to a broad range of clients worldwide. Thirdly, it engages in awareness-raising, policy dialogue and advocacy together with the local partners.

8. Among the clients and partners of Helvetas are multi- and bilateral agencies, research organizations, philanthropic foundations, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations, such as the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the European Union, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, the World Bank and United Nations agencies, to name a few. Helvetas is also a member of various networks (such as the NDC Partnership and Alliance 2015<sup>5</sup>), is an accredited observer organization to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and to the Green Climate Fund, and is a signatory to the Principles for Locally Led Adaptation.

9. Helvetas has defined climate-resilient development as a core area of engagement for more than two decades and contributes directly to the achievement of developing countries' nationally determined contributions, national adaptation planning and green growth strategies. Helvetas also supports locally led action, and community engagement and capacity-building. As part of its engagement strategy with GCF developed in 2025, Helvetas intends to focus on projects that are aligned with countries' priorities and address issues in water security; climate-resilient water, sanitation and hygiene; disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response; forests, land-use and nature-based solutions; and green industry and sustainable enterprise development.

## 2.3 Track record

10. Helvetas has an extensive track record in implementing or co-implementing with other international and local partners long-term sustainable development programmes, examples of which include the following:

- (a) A CHF (Swiss francs) 51 million (grants) project titled “Rural Hydraulic Support Program for the Water and Sanitation Sector” in Niger, funded by SDC;
- (b) A CHF 32 million (grants) project titled “RECONOMY – Revitalize, Reconnect, Reshape” in Eurasia and the Western Balkans (Sida);

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<sup>5</sup> A strategic network of seven European non-governmental organizations engaged in humanitarian and development action, with annual budgets ranging from EUR 30 million to EUR 350 million and with a combined footprint of around EUR 1 billion, operating in 90 countries. See [www.alliance2015.org/who-we-are/about](http://www.alliance2015.org/who-we-are/about).

- (c) A CHF 9.6 million (grants) project titled “Sustainable Natural Resources Management for Enhanced Food Security and to alleviate the plight of Ethiopian pastoralists”, funded by SDC;
- (d) Co-implementation of a CHF 17.4 million (grants) project titled “Gulf of Mottama Project” in Myanmar, funded by SDC; and
- (e) Co-implementation of a CHF 10.7 million (grants) project titled “Nature Conservation Programme in North Macedonia”, funded by SDC.

## 2.4 Potential support for direct access entities

11. Helvetas intends to actively and systematically strengthen the capacities of subnational, national, and regional entities and intermediaries – particularly those that intend to apply for GCF accreditation, enabling them to meet the GCF accreditation requirements and to independently access, manage and implement climate finance in line with their national priorities. Helvetas will pursue capacity development as a long-term, partnership-based process, anchored in country ownership and aligned with national institutional frameworks. In doing so, Helvetas commits to combine targeted technical assistance with hands-on collaboration, peer learning and institutional strengthening, focusing on those capacities that are critical for GCF accreditation and effective fund management, including environmental and social safeguards (ESS), gender responsiveness and results-based management.

12. The modalities of support Helvetas intends to provide to potential direct access applicants include joint programme and project development and implementation; targeted institutional and technical backstopping; facilitation of peer learning and communities of practice; and support for readiness and preparatory activities.

13. Helvetas also intends to adapt its role – whether as accredited entity, executing entity or technical partner – based on country context and on where it can most effectively contribute to sustainable capacity transfer and long-term institutional strengthening.

## III. Stage II accreditation review assessment

14. The applicant applied under the normal track accreditation process. Its application has been assessed by the Accreditation Panel (AP) during stage II (step 1) against the requirements in accordance with the GCF policies and standards identified in paragraph 3 above.

15. As part of this assessment, the AP consulted the applicant’s website and third-party websites to complement the information provided in the application.

### 3.1 Fiduciary standards

#### 3.1.1 Basic fiduciary standards: key administrative and financial capacities

16. Helvetas is an independent Swiss association governed by by-laws, internal regulations and applicable Swiss law. Its highest decision-making body is the General Assembly, which elects the members (between 11 and 18) of the Board of Directors (BoD), including a President and a Vice-President, and approves the organization’s mission statement, annual report and annual financial statements. The BoD is the supreme controlling body of the organization and bears responsibility for strategic direction, oversight of the Management Board (MB), and approval of annual programmes, budgets and key organizational regulations. The MB, led by the Executive Director, is responsible for the operational management of the applicant’s activities

in Switzerland and abroad. In addition to in its by-laws, the governance structure of Helvetas is elaborated in its BoD Business Regulations and in committee rules of procedure of the BoD, the latter of which cover BoD appointments, terms, compensation and reimbursement, as well as the role of the MB.

17. The BoD is supported by four formal committees: an Administration and Ethics Committee (AEC), a Nomination Committee, a Fundraising Committee and a Decision-Making Authority<sup>6</sup>. The composition, authority and operating arrangements of these bodies are set out in formal regulations or terms of reference. BoD members are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms and serve on a voluntary basis. Minutes of recent BoD and committee meetings provide evidence of their effective operation.

18. In provisional 2025 reporting, Helvetas declares expenditure of CHF 169.7 million and a global contingent of 1,657 staff (about 180 of which work in Switzerland). It maintains a consistent and formal organizational structure according to organizational charts reviewed by the AP, which show clear reporting lines from the General Assembly and the BoD for the Executive Director, the MB, departmental directors, thematic and functional units, and country programmes. The charts also identify BoD committees, internal audit and the applicant's main headquarters functions, which are finance and control, digital transformation and IT, people and culture, advisory services, international programmes, and marketing and communication.

19. Helvetas sets institutional objectives through a formal planning framework anchored in the Helvetas Strategy 2025–2028. These objectives are translated into programmatic strategies, country strategies, and annual plans and budgets, which are reviewed by an interdepartmental Programme Commission. The strategy has three core programmatic pillars (see paragraph 60 below) and integrates climate change as a strategic priority, while donor acquisition and fundraising strategies support alignment of resource mobilization with institutional priorities. The applicant has provided evidence of a track record showing that this framework is supported by structured strategic steering, monitoring and reporting, including annual budgets, corporate and management reporting, key performance indicators (KPIs), and financial reporting, including to donors and audits. Public annual reports, annual progress reports, BoD KPI reporting, country annual programme reports, and reporting to the key donor (SDC) confirm that there are regular reviews of performance and financial results.

20. The Helvetas financial management framework covers formal accounting, budgeting, monitoring, and reporting at the headquarters and country levels. Annual financial planning is based on multi-year project budgets consolidated into a corporate budget approved through the governance structure, while a dedicated financial monitoring manual defines monitoring tools, thresholds, responsibilities and corrective actions; financial roles are segregated through a documented responsibility matrix, supported by staff training and by an integrated system that incorporates the platform Sangama, the financial management and project monitoring system based on the finance software Abacus. Helvetas prepares consolidated annual financial statements, including cash-flow statements, in accordance with the Swiss Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (FER<sup>7</sup>) and the Swiss Code of Obligations,<sup>8</sup> as required for Zewo-certified (see paragraph 22 below) charitable organizations. Such statements provide a recognized, sector-appropriate Swiss report. The statements provide a true and fair view and are aligned with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) principles of reliable, transparent

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<sup>6</sup> The Helvetas emergency decision body for major security crises, allowing a limited group of Board members to act quickly when full Board deliberation may not be possible.

<sup>7</sup> FER stands for Fachempfehlungen zur Rechnungslegung, which translates into English as Accounting and Reporting Recommendations.

<sup>8</sup> The Swiss Code of Obligations is the country's main federal law governing contracts, commercial obligations, companies, and related accounting and reporting rules.

financial reporting. Additional evidence of financial management maturity is provided by the applicant's Zewo recertification through to 31 December 2028 and BoD-level finance and KPI monitoring. In addition, audit reports confirm regulatory compliance with the applicant's charter, Swiss laws relevant to the applicant, the applicant is able to publish its project audit reports.

21. The applicant's AEC performs audit committee functions under written terms of reference that define its composition, authority and working methods. It comprises up to seven BoD members with relevant expertise, is chaired by the President or Vice-President of the BoD, normally meets twice a year, and advises the BoD on annual audit plans, internal audit reporting, follow-up measures and, where needed, specific audits. The AEC also oversees ethics and code-related matters, and recent minutes evidence regular participation by BoD members, the Executive Director, senior management and, where relevant, internal audit, together with active oversight of compliance, internal audit and wider control strengthening.

22. The applicant has also provided complementary evidence of externally recognized governance and control standards through its Zewo certification,<sup>9</sup> renewed and valid until 31 December 2028. While Zewo certification is not a substitute for an audit committee, it provides additional evidence that Helvetas operates within an external framework covering governance, internal control, transparency, annual financial reporting and auditing standards.

23. Helvetas has established its internal audit function through a formal internal audit policy, which references an overarching audit and assurance policy (see paragraph 25 below). This second policy defines the function's mission, independence, authority, scope and professional standards, including adherence to Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) guidance. It furthermore defines internal auditing, contains a code of ethics and references the IIA Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing. The Internal Auditor and senior auditor are certified accountants with significant internal audit experience, and the function reports technically to the President of the BoD and administratively to the Director of Finance and Control and the Executive Director. The function confirms its organizational independence to the AEC annually.

24. The applicant has also provided recent internal audit overviews, including plans, sample mission reports, sample fraud investigations and sample support mission documentation intended to strengthen controls in higher-risk country programmes. The 2026 plan is risk-based, and each year Helvetas follows the plan's recommendations, with progress reported to the MB and AEC. The internal audit policy provides for a quality assurance and improvement programme (QAIP) through internal assessments and external quality assessment. Evidence has been provided via AEC meeting minutes, reports of internal assessments, documentation of proactive engagement with external auditors, and documentation of efforts by management and the AEC to strengthen the function; however, Helvetas has not implemented external quality assessments.

25. The Helvetas audit and assurance policy covers external organization-level audits, country programme audits, donor-specific audits and partner audits. It requires the use of independent audit firms, operating in accordance with recognized professional standards, including ISA 805,<sup>10</sup> with separate reporting on internal control, compliance and economical

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<sup>9</sup> Zewo certification is a Swiss quality seal for charitable, donation-funded organizations, confirming that the organization has been independently monitored against Zewo standards for ethics and integrity, governance, transparency, accountability, true and fair reporting, appropriate controls, fundraising practice, and the economical, effective and designated use of donations. See <https://zewo.ch/en>.

<sup>10</sup> ISA 805 (Revised), Special Considerations – Audits of Single Financial Statements and Specific Elements, Accounts or Items of a Financial Statement. Available at [www.iaasb.org/publications/isa-805-revised-special-considerations-audits-single-financial-statements-and-specific-elements](http://www.iaasb.org/publications/isa-805-revised-special-considerations-audits-single-financial-statements-and-specific-elements).

use of resources. At the corporate level, KPMG AG is the current statutory external auditor, reappointed in 2025 under policies that determine the tenure and rotation of audit partners.

26. The applicant has provided audited consolidated financial reports for the three years to 2024, with audit reports and management letters to the BoD for 2022–2024, all carrying unmodified opinions. BoD and committee records show review of the financial statements, audit reports and follow-up of prior-year issues. Country-level examples from Bangladesh and Viet Nam include independent project audits and management action trackers, and display a capacity to publish project financial statements and audit reports for donor-funded projects. Helvetas has a formal, risk-based internal control framework documented in its internal control policy and guiding principles, finance manual, and related responsibility and risk-control matrices. This framework is explicitly aligned with the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO) model and its five components. It also follows the three-lines-of-defence model, in which operational management is the first line, the finance and control unit and related oversight functions form the second, and internal audit provides independent third-line assurance. Responsibilities are defined from BoD to project level and reflected in project and programme reporting guidelines.

27. The applicant's financial control framework is operationalized through standardized financial management, monitoring and assurance processes, with country-level responsibilities assigned to Country Directors, National Finance Managers, Project Managers and other operational staff. The framework covers budgeting, accounting, funds flow, procurement, partner management, reporting and assurance, with segregation of duties across key processes. It is subject to regular risk-based second-line review through finance control missions and internal control reviews; the applicant has shared examples for Tajikistan and the United Republic of Tanzania, and further reviews are planned for 2026.

28. In 2024, Helvetas developed and operationalized what it describes as its administrative backbone via a change initiative that responded to internal audit findings and related compliance reforms. This work has become a central element of the control and governance framework for strengthening fiduciary assurance, administrative oversight, risk management and organizational standards. It covers finance, procurement, legal and compliance, and information technology, supported by minimum standards, harmonized roles, training, technical support, digital tools and structured follow-up, with internal audit and the AEC providing ongoing independent review.

29. Helvetas also has a structured risk management system under which the MB conducts twice-yearly risk assessments covering strategic, financial, operational, compliance, reputational and external risks. The applicant's track record includes dashboards, risk maps and mitigation plans submitted to the AEC. Additionally, its country programmes undertake structured country risk assessments using standard templates and action plans, which are reviewed regionally and by management and consolidated into country risk reports.

30. Procurement at Helvetas is governed by a manual applicable at headquarters and country level, including in relevant downstream contexts among partners and assisted organizations. The manual sets out methods and thresholds, approval roles, segregation of duties, complaints handling, and record retention, with competitive procedures ranging from direct purchase to public tender and open competition. The manual requires tender notices and results to be publicly disclosed through appropriate channels and provides for country-level adaptation, as reflected in local manuals and in examples from headquarters and country offices including those in the Western Balkans, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Peru. Procurement complaints are also formally addressed under the framework, with a Mozambique case evidencing an investigation and a response, and subsequent internal-audit and AEC follow-up that further strengthened procurement standards, training, compliance oversight and downstream partner procurement controls.

31. The AP finds that the applicant's policies, procedures and capacity fully meet the basic fiduciary standards on key administrative and financial capacities. However, the applicant's track record is insufficient. The relevant gap is identified in paragraph 24 and is reflected by the corresponding condition for accreditation in section 4.2.

### 3.1.2 **Basic fiduciary standards: transparency and accountability**

32. Helvetas has a documented ethics framework centred on its code of conduct (CoC<sup>11</sup>) for employees and CoC for contracted parties, supported by binding regulations on child protection; sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH); mobbing and abuse of authority; corruption; fraud; conflicts of interest; and whistle-blowing. The employee CoC is binding on BoD members, employees and consultants worldwide and is annexed to employment contracts, while the contracted-parties CoC forms part of agreements with consultants, service providers, implementing partners, system partners and assisted organizations.

33. The framework is reinforced through continuous training and awareness measures, including a global digital onboarding programme introduced in 2026 with mandatory compliance modules, and a country-level initiative to harmonize complaint mechanisms through multilingual toolkits and role-based training and webinars. Training completion and CoC acknowledgements are centrally documented.

34. At governance level, ethics oversight rests with the AEC, whose terms of reference assign responsibility for overseeing regulations and guidelines on the CoC, for Employees whistle-blowing, anti-corruption, conflicts of interest and harassment-related matters; receiving annual information on measures taken and violations; and leading investigation committees where management or BoD members are implicated. Conflicts of interest are managed through formal disclosure requirements, confidential internal records, case-by-case assessment and documented recusals, or other mitigation measures, with AEC oversight of senior-level cases.

35. Helvetas has established a formal framework to prevent and address prohibited practices through its CoCs; regulations on corruption, fraud and conflicts of interest; related implementation guidelines; and whistle-blower policy. Together, these instruments cover the main categories relevant to the GCF Policy on Prohibited Practices, including corrupt, fraudulent, coercive and collusive practices as well as abuse of authority, money-laundering, terrorist financing and retaliation against whistle-blowers. The framework defines complaint scope, decision-making responsibilities, sanctions and contractual consequences for counterparties, including suspension of payments, recovery of funds and, where required, extraordinary audit. A dedicated Compliance Officer, reporting to the Director of Finance and Control, coordinates safeguarding and compliance processes, while the AEC oversees anti-corruption and whistle-blowing arrangements and leads cases involving BoD and MB members.

36. Helvetas has established multiple complaint intake channels, including internal reporting lines, an online complaint form, dedicated reporting email addresses and reporting through the external provider Safecall, an independent service provider accessible by phone or online. Complaints may be submitted by staff, partners, suppliers, beneficiaries and members of the public, and the online form and Safecall allow confidential, semi-anonymous or anonymous reporting with secure follow-up. The framework also provides protection against reprisal, with measures determined on a case-by-case basis including psychosocial assistance deployed where needed. Recent case reports from Myanmar and the Lao People's Democratic Republic show that allegations were documented, escalated, investigated, communicated to donors, and

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<sup>11</sup> See Publications. Available at [www.Helvetas.org/en/switzerland/who-we-are/publications/regulations](http://www.Helvetas.org/en/switzerland/who-we-are/publications/regulations).

followed through to recovery and corrective action, while AEC records indicate continued management attention to fraud prevention and financial compliance.

37. The Helvetas investigation function is exercised through its Case Management Unit (CMU), comprising the responsible head office director (or, below a defined financial threshold, a manager or regional coordinator), the Director of Finance and Control, another senior finance staff member and internal audit. The Compliance Officer receives complaints, conducts initial desk reviews and submits recommendations to the CMU, which decides whether an investigation is warranted, oversees investigations, communicates with funding organizations, and reports outcomes to management and the AEC. The procedures cover intake, acknowledgement, risk assessment, protection measures, investigation, the final decision, sanctions, documentation and reporting. Inclusion of internal audit in the CMU supports independence, and Helvetas has provided evidence of systematized fraud and corruption case reporting in recent years. At present, the CoCs and core regulations are publicly available, but details of the investigative process and CMU terms of reference are not; the applicant has committed to publishing and linking relevant elements of its investigation guidance alongside online complaint intake mechanisms.

38. Helvetas has established an institutional AML/CFT framework through its regulations on anti-money-laundering, anti-organized crime and countering the financing of terrorism, which apply to governing bodies, staff and consultants. The regulations state that Helvetas shall apply the regulations to relationships with collaborative organizations and shall take steps to encourage collaborative organizations to adopt policies and procedures consistent with the principles of Helvetas. The regulations aim to prevent misuse of Helvetas and donor funds for money-laundering, organized crime or terrorist financing and are framed on the basis of risk, with due diligence required for counterparties and transactions.

39. The applicant has provided evidence of structured counterparty due diligence. For consortium partners, subcontractors and private sector collaborators, Helvetas applies a documented due diligence process using RepRisk,<sup>12</sup> its internal company assessment tool, desk and network research, and sanctions screening tools (including LexisNexis<sup>13</sup>). The process requires a documented decision before collaboration, with disputed cases escalated for management decision. Sample due diligence files and process documentation reviewed by the AP indicate that this is operational in practice. For local implementation partners, Helvetas applies its partner appraisal process under its partnership guidelines, which cover reviews of legitimacy, governance, financial management and minimum ethical standards, including AML/CFT-related provisions.

40. Helvetas has also provided evidence of transaction-level controls over fund transfers and payments. In addition to conducting onboarding due diligence, it verifies the bank and account details of new suppliers and new accounts at payment stage, and payments are subject to established financial controls. While Helvetas has not yet delivered stand-alone AML/CFT training, a revised finance manual launched in 2026 is being rolled out through country-level training for operational and finance staff, and these initiatives are intended to strengthen consistent application of financial policies, procedures and controls.

41. The AP finds that the applicant's policies, procedures and capacity, supported by evidence of its track record, partially meet the basic fiduciary standards on transparency and accountability and fully meet (to the extent applicable to accreditation) the GCF Policy on Prohibited Practices, the GCF Policy on the Protection of Whistleblowers and Witnesses, and the

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<sup>12</sup> See [www.reprisk.com](http://www.reprisk.com).

<sup>13</sup> LexisNexis Bridger Insight XG is a comprehensive compliance-screening solution designed to enhance due diligence and streamline fraud risk management.

GCF AML/CFT Policy. The relevant gap is identified in paragraph 37 and is reflected by the corresponding condition for accreditation in section 4.2.

### 3.1.3 Specialized fiduciary standard for project management

42. Helvetas demonstrates an established project management framework and track record of implementation across complex, multi-year programmes. Evidence of the applicant's track record reviewed by the AP includes (a) the CHF 32 million RECONOMY inclusive economic development programme funded by Sida in Eurasia and the Western Balkans from 2020 to 2026; (b) the multiphase CHF 53.2 million DEMOS (Decentralization and Municipal Support) project in the Western Balkans funded by SDC, Sida and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation between 2014 and 2025; and (c) the CHF 9.6 million Borana natural resources management and pastoral livelihoods project (NRM-Borana) in Ethiopia funded by SDC from 2016 to 2022.

43. The applicant has a structured PCM architecture supported by standardized tools for design, implementation, monitoring, reporting, review and closure. Project identification and appraisal are guided by formal templates and procedures. There is a project document template that requires context analysis, a rationale, lessons learned, stakeholder analysis, an impact hypothesis, a logical framework, an implementation strategy, monitoring and evaluation arrangements and a risk assessment, indicating a systematic design process. At the entry stage, an acquisition note records core project parameters and screens legal, thematic, competitive, security, do-no-harm and financial risks, while a risk assessment flow chart for new projects adds formal security screening, threat identification, escalation, mitigation and decision points before a project proceeds.

44. Helvetas also applies appraisal procedures to implementing partners. A partner appraisal questionnaire is used at the start of new collaborations to assess institutional strengths, weaknesses and capacity-strengthening priorities. For on-granting in climate finance, the applicant has a more explicit appraisal model under its PCM manual for on-granting in climate finance projects, described in section 3.1.4 below. The applicant's track record further indicates that appraisal is informed by implementation experience and review findings. The "Climate Change Resilient Andes Phase 2" project was designed on the basis of the phase 1 results, an external midterm evaluation, regional strategic committee (a regional-level steering body that informs project design, strategy and review) input, ministry interviews, and regional and national design workshops, while NRM-Borana shows the use of external midterm review findings to adjust implementation and planning.

45. At the implementation stage, Helvetas delivers complex, multi-year and multi-partner programmes through direct implementation and through 1,204 implementing partners (in 2025), more than half being civil society organizations. Over one third of the 2025 expenditure was channelled through partners, and additional funding was allocated to local capacity-strengthening. Operational project management is supported by a standardized PCM toolkit, including a synopsis sheet, a project progress sheet, a performance indicators sheet, annual and semester reporting templates, and portfolio reporting tools, which together structure implementation planning, role allocation, resourcing, progress tracking, and reporting from project to portfolio level. Track record examples include the Climate Change Resilient Andes - Regional Project Phase 2 which applies a theory of change, a logical framework, an organizational structure, governance and coordination mechanisms, budget, risk assessment, and dedicated monitoring, evaluation and knowledge-management provisions. Other project records, including those for NRM-Borana, show annual planning, multi-partner coordination, implementation adjustments, baseline preparation, formal agreements with public counterparts, and follow-up of lessons learned in fragile and climate-affected settings.

46. Helvetas has organization-wide systems for project monitoring that go beyond donor-specific reporting. The project and programme reporting guidelines position reporting as both the end point and a restart of the project cycle, and they require narrative reports, project progress sheets, synopsis sheets and indicator reporting, with defined roles for Project Managers, Country Directors and Regional Coordinators. The “Monitoring and Evaluation Brief: PCM Strategic Steering and Learning” and related monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) materials set out a wider monitoring architecture centred on results-oriented management, accountability, learning, use of digital monitoring tools and production of knowledge products. In some programmes, notably RECONOMY, Helvetas applies a more developed results-measurement and knowledge-management architecture, including intervention guides, results chains, measurement sheets, data validation, attribution rationale, and defined responsibilities for monitoring and learning functions.

47. Regarding evaluation, the applicant’s systems and track record show regular use of external review and structured management follow-up. For the applicant’s “ENSSURE (Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment) Phase II” project, the documentation includes annual progress reporting, compiled yearly plans of operation, and an externally commissioned midterm review undertaken against Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) criteria. This midterm reporting drew on a document review, monitoring and evaluation data, tracer studies, stakeholder interviews, and trainee and apprentice interviews. It was followed by a formal management response by the donor, SDC. Additional evidence from a Nepal water, sanitation and hygiene project post-implementation monitoring report shows the use of independent assessment, functionality checks and post-completion verification of service sustainability.

48. Project-at-risk management at Helvetas begins at project entry and continues through implementation, monitoring and portfolio review. At entry stage, the flow chart-based risk tool provides a formal screening pathway that incorporates a security risk assessment and conflict-sensitive project management lens, with threat identification, escalation, mitigation and response measures, and management or BoD decision points dependent on risk level. During implementation, risk identification and corrective action are supported through recurring content monitoring, financial monitoring, project reporting and portfolio review, while the project and programme reporting guidelines include formal flagging and emphasize timely action for steering and quality management.

49. Portfolio-level reporting shows that Helvetas uses structured flagging of delivery risks and tailored corrective action, as illustrated by a project in Asia, where a subgrant fraud case led to suspension, recovery and strengthened financial controls; a project in another Asian country, where persistent implementation and leadership weaknesses resulted in management restructuring; and a project in Africa, where external conflict-related disruption prompted formal project reconfiguration, contingency funding activation, and donor-approved budget and geographical adjustments.

50. Regarding public disclosure of project information, the project and programme reporting guidelines are geared towards knowledge-sharing and learning, and they provide tools and templates for informing donors about project progress and accountability to the public, stakeholders and partners. This confirms the capacity of Helvetas to report project and beneficiary information and progress for GCF-funded projects.

51. The AP finds that the applicant’s policies, procedures and capacity, supported by evidence of its track record, fully meet the specialized fiduciary standard for project management.

### 3.1.4 **Specialized fiduciary standard for grant award and/or funding allocation mechanisms**

52. Helvetas has established a track record to date for competitive grant awarding, from project identification and call design through appraisal, selection, contracting, implementation, monitoring, completion and evaluation. Helvetas has provided high-level evidence of prior grant-management experience through its Capability Statement on Regranting, citing recent schemes in Bhutan, the Western Balkans, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Serbia and Sri Lanka. To complement its operational practice, in anticipation of GCF accreditation, Helvetas developed a PCM manual for on-granting in climate finance projects that codifies the entire grant cycle, from competitive calls and two-stage appraisal to selection, contracting, monitoring and evaluation. The manual also sets out minimum contractual and reporting requirements and a project-level risk management system integrated with an environmental and social management system (ESMS).

53. The PCM manual requires calls for proposals to disclose eligibility criteria, eligible activities, implementation period, ESS and gender requirements, appraisal and selection methodology, procedures and channels for complaints; this indicates a structured and transparent approach to grant award design. The applicant's appraisal model is based by default on a two-stage process using a project information form (PIF) followed by a project application form (PAF), with a one-stage approach allowed only where justified. The PIF serves as an eligibility and concept filter, while the PAF requires a full proposal and supporting documents, including a results framework aligned with the Helvetas framework and, applicable donor requirements. Appraisal is undertaken primarily by Helvetas experts, and the manual provides an objective scoring model with weighted criteria covering climate and co-benefits, technical feasibility, financial and economic assessment, risks, and implementation feasibility. Scoring, ranking and appraisal conclusions are required to be documented and communicated to applicants, with summary project information and applicable conditions published on the applicant's country websites (in a procedure similar to that described for procurement in paragraph 30 above), and Helvetas is prepared to centrally publish any GCF-funded calls for proposals. Recent track record examples have been provided from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Peru.

54. Under the formalized selection and approval procedures, a Project Selection Committee of at least three Helvetas or external experts is required, and there are safeguards against role conflicts whereby members may not have drafted the call or appraised the proposals, and staff implementing the parent project may not serve on the committee. Where the committee modifies the list of recommended projects, a written justification signed by all members is required. The final list of approved projects is to be published on the Helvetas website, and unsuccessful applicants are to be notified promptly in writing with brief reasons for the rejection.

55. The PCM manual further defines contracting and downstream control arrangements. Grant agreements must include project scope, rights and responsibilities, payment schedules, procurement rules, reporting and audit requirements, supervision arrangements, amendment and termination clauses, and relevant annexes such as financing plans, CoC and disclosure forms, and ESS instruments where applicable. During implementation, Helvetas may limit advances, link interim disbursements to technical and financial reporting, pay major suppliers directly, retain at least 10 per cent of overall disbursement until completion conditions are met, and require the return of unused funds. Risk assessment is required at the appraisal, portfolio, implementation and closure stages, covering implementation, technical, counterparty, market, foreign exchange, country, ESS and donor-specific risks.

56. Helvetas is part of a broad set of alliances, networks and partnership platforms, notably Alliance 2015 and Alliance Sud.<sup>14</sup> It also participates in thematic and policy bodies and Swiss and international networks to mobilize expertise, to encourage institutional learning around policy dialogue, and to increase outreach and impact. Helvetas is in good standing with major bilateral and multilateral donors, having had substantial cooperations with donors such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UNICEF and the World Food Programme.

57. The AP finds that the applicant's policies, procedures and capacity, supported by evidence of its track record, fully meet the specialized fiduciary standard for grant award and/or funding allocation mechanisms.

3.1.5 **Specialized fiduciary standard for on-lending and/or blending (for loans, equity and guarantees)**

58. The applicant did not apply for accreditation for this standard at this time.

## 3.2 Environmental and social safeguards

### 3.2.1 Environmental and social policy, management and monitoring

59. The Environmental and Social Safeguards Management (ESSM) Policy, approved by the Helvetas BoD in 2018, constitutes the core policy framework of the Helvetas Environmental and Social Safeguards Management System (ESMS). The policy was revised in 2022 and applies to all Helvetas climate finance operations, including those to be proposed for GCF financing. It is publicly disclosed on the Helvetas website. The policy establishes the overarching principles and requirements for screening, assessing, and managing potential E&S risks and impacts associated with supported projects and programmes. It has explicitly adopted International Finance Corporation (IFC) Performance Standards 1–8 and is aligned with the applicable national legal frameworks and relevant international laws and conventions in the countries of operation. Implementation of the policy is operationalized through a suite of supporting instruments, including the ESSM manual (revised in 2025), the MEAL framework, the global procurement manual (2024), the CoCs, and the grievance redress mechanism (GRM).

60. Helvetas has made a commitment to advancing a paradigm shift towards climate-resilient development and low-emission pathways guided by its Programme 2025–2028, the ESSM policy, and the Gender and Social Equity (GSE, 2022) policy. The programme is organized around three working areas: (a) Water, Food and Climate; (b) Voice, Inclusion and Cohesion; and (c) Skills, Jobs and Income. Through these areas, particularly Water, Food and Climate, Helvetas seeks to systematically mainstream climate and disaster resilience across its portfolio.

61. The organization has set a quantitative target for climate-responsive interventions to represent at least 40 per cent of total programme volume by 2028, with full climate responsiveness envisaged by 2040. Climate integration is overseen by the Head Water Food and Climate and monitored through its Climate and Disaster Resilient Marker, which classifies projects from negative to transformative. A 2024 review of 194 projects found that 82 per cent were at least climate-sensitive; within the Water, Food and Climate portfolio (USD 65.8 million), 86 per cent of projects were classified as transformative or climate-sensitive, indicating a strong concentration of interventions with substantive climate considerations. Helvetas does

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<sup>14</sup> Alliance Sud is the Swiss centre of excellence for international cooperation and development policy. See [www.alliancesud.ch/en](http://www.alliancesud.ch/en).

not finance carbon-intensive activities and has applied the GHG Protocol Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard since 2020 to track emissions across scopes 1–3, with the results informing country-level decarbonization action plans and contributions to an internal decarbonization fund. In support of its accreditation application, Helvetas submitted four project summaries demonstrating experience in scaling climate adaptation measures, promoting intersectoral approaches, strengthening institutional capacities and engaging effectively with implementation partners.

62. Helvetas does not have a stand-alone Indigenous Peoples policy; however, its human rights-based, inclusive and do-no-harm approaches – embedded in the ESSM policy, the GSE policy, the GSE Vision and Actions (2025–2028), and the Voice, Inclusion and Cohesion Strategy – include explicit provisions to ensure that considerations relating to Indigenous Peoples are systematically integrated across organizational strategy, partnerships and programme design. These instruments uphold the principles of free, prior, and informed consent and promote the meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples, particularly women, as active agents of development. Helvetas applies exclusion criteria to prevent adverse impacts on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and prohibits involuntary resettlement, land acquisition or land appropriation. All partners, executing entities and intermediaries are screened through their ESS and quality assurance processes. Through projects in Bolivia, Peru and Vietnam, Helvetas has demonstrated inclusive stakeholder engagement, effective grievance redress, protection of the rights and cultural practices of Indigenous Peoples, and empowerment of vulnerable communities throughout the project cycle. The AP finds that Helvetas has the systems and capacity to meet Performance Standard 7 on Indigenous Peoples under the GCF interim ESS standards.

63. The Helvetas CoCs and accompanying regulations on child protection and on the response to SEAH, mobbing and abuse of authority are binding on all employees worldwide and on all individuals and entities engaged contractually with Helvetas. These instruments adopt a zero-tolerance approach to SEAH, child abuse, and child labour across all programmes and workplaces. Together with the human resources policy and the global procurement manual, they set out provisions on non-discrimination, equal treatment, complaint and dispute resolution mechanisms, and the protection of the rights and dignity of children, youth and persons with disabilities; they also promote a survivor-centred approach to SEAH case management. Supervisors are responsible for promoting and enforcing compliance. Internal SEAH concerns may be reported to a direct superior or via a designated email address, while external complaints are submitted through Safecall. All cases are with strict confidentiality. Staff and partners are regularly informed of these requirements through periodic briefings, annual performance appraisals, and the inclusion of relevant provisions in contractual agreements. The AP finds that Helvetas has the systems and capacity to meet SEAH-related principles under the GCF revised Environmental and Social Policy.

64. The Helvetas ESSM policy and manual require (a) monitoring of projects and the collection of environmental, social and gender data; (b) public consultations and evaluations to capture lessons learned; and (c) continuous improvement and staff orientation. ESS indicators are tracked through institution-wide systems, including GSE monitoring and climate and disaster resilience mainstreaming. The Senior Advisor for Evaluation and Learning, within Team Learning and Innovation in Advisory Services, conducts E&S monitoring and evaluation or reviews reports prepared by project teams, and produces analytical measurement, reporting and verification reports. These reports are reviewed by the ESS Officer, in coordination with the Senior Advisor for Evaluation and Learning and, where designated, the GSE Coordinator. The MEAL Officer facilitates learning and adaptive management through regular review and planning sessions with project teams and stakeholders. Monitoring and evaluation findings are used to update baselines, indicators and implementation approaches throughout the project cycle. Donor-funded projects typically undergo a midterm review and an independent

end-of-phase evaluation. Helvetas has submitted sample midterm reviews, final evaluations, monitoring reports and baseline–endline studies demonstrating a solid track record in participatory monitoring and evaluation of aspects relating to E&S, gender and climate. The AP finds that Helvetas has the systems and capacity to meet the requirements of the Evaluation Policy for the GCF.

65. The Helvetas standardized global performance indicators (2025–2028), a core component of its MEAL system, are used by staff and implementing entities to measure and report progress against expected results. These indicators are tracked through a results dashboard, which also supports verification of compliance with organizational policies, the ESMS and institutional standards (including GSE and climate and disaster resilience mainstreaming). In addition, the ESSM manual provides the framework for systematic, organization-wide ESMS reviews and ensures that findings inform updates to policies, procedures and tools, thereby strengthening oversight, accountability and continuous improvement of E&S risk management. Helvetas has submitted an independent organization-wide report on environmental management and performance, including in relation to climate change, confirming the effectiveness of the ESMS in line with international best practices, such as those of GCF and the International Climate Initiative. The report also includes recommendations to support continuous improvement, with particular emphasis on enhanced applicability and user-friendliness, strengthened internal capacity, and the continued documentation of lessons learned from ESMS applications at the project level.

66. The Helvetas ESMS is fully embedded in its PCM system and applies a precautionary, exclusion-based due diligence approach to avoid and minimize E&S risks and impacts across all investments, including those implemented through financial intermediaries. The ESSM manual and ESS project appraisal tools (revised in 2021) guide staff from concept through full project development and include (a) checklists to identify and assess environmental, social, climate and gender risks in line with IFC Performance Standards 1–8; (b) E&S risk categorization (A, B, C) consistent with GCF requirements; (c) project-level E&S risk assessments; (d) stakeholder engagement guidance; (e) risk mitigation measures; and (f) measures for monitoring and evaluating E&S risk management.

67. For selected entities, including large corporations, Helvetas applies a human rights due diligence tool aligned with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. For mandatory E&S risk instruments, such as an environmental and social impact assessment or an environmental and social management plan (ESMP), the ESS Officer, in coordination with the Country Director, Regional Coordinators and field staff, prepares terms of reference and procures qualified experts. The ESS Officer, supported by the GSE Coordinator, reviews the initial E&S risk categorization and all submitted documentation for compliance. Each project is supported by an ESMP, which is regularly monitored; where non-compliance risks are identified, remedial actions are agreed with the project unit or subcontracted party and must be resolved prior to any final disbursement of funds. Helvetas has submitted sample E&S risk instruments, including an environmental and social commitment plan, an ESMP, a chemicals and pesticide management plan, and a stakeholder engagement plan. This demonstrates its capacity to identify and manage E&S risks and to meet donor requirements, including those of the Adaptation Fund, the Agence Française de Développement, Sida, and SDC.

68. The Helvetas Water, Food and Climate Team, within which the ESS Officer is located, provides oversight and ensures the strategic integration of safeguards within climate and environmental programming. The ESS Officer, in coordination with the Senior Advisor for GSE and the Senior Advisor for Evaluation and Learning, as well as Country Directors and Programme Coordinators, is responsible for ESMS oversight and for providing technical support to executing entities. The ESS Officer also coordinates updates to the ESSM policy and manual, with any policy revisions submitted to the BoD for approval. The Senior Advisor for

Climate Change advances institutional climate and resilience objectives and provides technical backstopping to projects. Helvetas has committed to strengthening this structure by establishing a full-time ESS Officer position within 12 months of accreditation to enhance systematic engagement between the environmental and social function and operational teams. The AP positively notes the strength and experience of existing personnel, including their participation in donor-led training on ESS, stakeholder engagement and IFC Performance Standards 1–8.

69. Helvetas staff have received training on ESS; free, prior and informed consent; community mobilization and stakeholder engagement; GRMs; gender equity and social inclusion; contract management for staff and suppliers; and funder compliance requirements. In addition, Helvetas has strengthened the E&S risk management capacities of national ministries, rural development actors and project management units across Asia and the Pacific, East Africa and southern Africa, and West and Central Africa. Through an IFAD-funded initiative comprising targeted training, training of trainers, global webinars and policy briefs, Helvetas has reached more than 600 participants, demonstrating leadership in building partner capacity to develop and implement robust ESMS.

70. The AP finds that the applicant's ESMS – comprising the ESSM policy, risk and impact identification and risk categorization framework, E&S management and monitoring tools, and staff competencies, supported by evidence of its track record – fully meets the GCF revised Environmental and Social Policy to the extent applicable to accreditation and GCF interim ESS standards for maximum E&S risk category B/I-2 projects/programmes with respect to IFC Performance Standards 1–8.

### 3.2.2 **External communications, consultations, information disclosure and grievance redress at the institutional level**

71. Helvetas has established an institution-wide GRM (incorporating external communication) that enables communities, employees and other affected stakeholders to submit E&S-related inquiries, feedback, and complaints at both corporate and project levels, including in relation to projects implemented by executing entities. The GRM is defined in the ESSM policy and the CoCs and covers issues relating to procurement, project implementation and ESS. The GRM guidelines outline the complaints-handling process and specify the roles and responsibilities of relevant Helvetas units in managing complaints. Safecall serves as the independent external reporting channel, allowing stakeholders to submit complaints in more than 170 languages, thereby ensuring broad accessibility. Complaints, including anonymous submissions, may be lodged through multiple channels, including an online platform, direct engagement with project staff or email. The Notification Officer receives, screens and manages complaints in accordance with the GRM guidelines, and a central complaints register is maintained. The AP finds that the GRM, including Safecall, is aligned with the GCF criteria for accessibility, accountability, transparency and independence under the GCF revised Environmental and Social Policy.

72. The Helvetas approach to information disclosure and public consultation is defined in its ESMS and governed by the ESSM policy, which commits to meaningful stakeholder engagement, transparency and timely disclosure of E&S assessment documents throughout the project cycle. Consultation and disclosure processes are used to inform project design, mitigation measures and adaptive management, with relevant E&S information made available in English and applicable local languages. Key findings and lessons from selected evaluations are shared publicly through webinars and impact sheets. Helvetas applies the OECD-DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, which require the publication of evaluation results, impact assessments, and related documents to staff, donors and project stakeholders. Helvetas also partners with the public and private sectors, donors, and local communities to

strengthen outreach and impact. Its website provides public access to policies, training materials, project reports and E&S information. Helvetas has formally committed to disclosing full project-level E&S documentation, in line with applicable timing and language requirements, for GCF-financed category B/I-2 projects and programmes.

73. Helvetas requires each project to establish a complaint and feedback response mechanism proportionate to its risks and impacts, supported by multiple locally accessible channels (e.g. suggestion boxes, walk-in hours, hotlines and email), with clearly defined responsibilities, timelines and follow-up procedures. Across projects, the mechanism provides a safe and accessible avenue for community members and partners to raise concerns or provide feedback on project activities and staff conduct. It differentiates between sensitive and non-sensitive cases, safeguards confidentiality, and includes referral pathways to support services where necessary. The MEAL Officer is responsible for establishing the project-level mechanism to ensure downward accountability. All grievances are logged, addressed and reported as part of environmental and social risk monitoring. Complaints relating to E&S matters received at the country level are immediately escalated to the Notification Officer at head office; this function is embedded within the Compliance Officer role, which operates independently of the project implementation and management functions.

74. The Notification Officer registers all complaints, determines their eligibility against established criteria, screens them for compliance with the Helvetas ESS standards, and centrally manages each case. Depending on the nature of the complaint, case handling may be delegated to the Procurement Coordinator, ESS Officer, Regional Coordinator or relevant Country Director. Based on the recommendation of the Notification Officer, the CMU determines whether an investigation is required. The Notification Officer ensures that all complaints and related documentation are securely collected and filed, and that complainants are informed of actions taken; complainants who remain dissatisfied may pursue legal remedies outside Helvetas. Over the past three years, Helvetas has not received any complaints related to ESS management.

75. The Compliance Officer oversees the complaints process and related policies. The AEC provides oversight of cases involving senior management or those presenting significant reputational risk, thereby ensuring accountability at the governance level. The CMU reviews cases, identifies lessons learned and recommends preventative measures to the MB for future implementation.

76. The AP finds that the applicant's system of external communications, GRM and information disclosure, supported by evidence of its track record, fully meets the GCF revised Environmental and Social Policy (to the extent applicable to accreditation), the GCF interim ESS standards and the GCF Information Disclosure Policy regarding E&S information disclosure requirements for maximum E&S risk category B/I-2 projects/programmes with respect to IFC Performance Standards 1-8.

### 3.3 Gender

77. Helvetas demonstrates its institutional commitment to gender equality and social equity through its GSE policy, approved by the BoD in 2022. The policy sets out nine core principles promoting an integrated, rights-based approach grounded in the do-no-harm principle and in inclusion, participation and intersectionality at both institutional and project levels; it also explicitly addresses discrimination, power imbalances, gender-based violence, social exclusion and climate-related vulnerabilities. The policy is operationalized through the GSE Diamonds framework, which strengthens the integration of GSE across human resources systems, accountability mechanisms and organizational culture. The Helvetas GSE Vision and Actions 2025-2028 further articulates strategic priorities across eight thematic areas – climate change,

conflict, global crises, humanitarian response, migration, urbanization, poverty and inequality, and digitalization – emphasizing the equitable participation and self-empowerment of women, Indigenous Peoples, youth and other marginalized groups as central to sustainable and climate-resilient development.

78. Helvetas operationalizes its gender strategy through annual gender action plans at both institutional and project levels. The GSE Marker, adapted from the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker, is applied portfolio-wide to classify projects and ensure the systematic integration of GSE from design through implementation, monitoring, evaluation and learning. Gender assessment is a mandatory procedural step.

79. Gender guidelines define requirements for screening gender risks, conducting project-level gender risk assessments, preparing gender action plans and undertaking audits, as well as for stakeholder engagement, grievance management, partnerships, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, information disclosure, and knowledge management from a gender and diversity perspective. At country level, GSE Focal Persons and programme teams apply gender-responsive approaches throughout the project cycle, supported by the GSE Working Group and external expertise as needed. Programme staff compile sex- and age-disaggregated data on a quarterly basis, including data on women’s participation. Project documentation demonstrates the capacity of Helvetas to systematically integrate gender considerations and climate resilience across its operations, embedding women’s empowerment and gender co-benefits in project design and implementation in line with the requirements of the updated GCF Gender Policy.

80. Helvetas maintains dedicated gender expertise at the institutional level, complemented by decentralized capacity at the country and project levels. Strategic accountability for GSE rests with senior management under the oversight of the BoD, while operational coordination and quality assurance are led by the GSE Coordinator and Senior Advisor. The GSE Coordinator tracks gender-disaggregated performance indicators annually across organizational, regional, country and project levels and works closely with the people and culture function to align GSE commitments with human resources policies on recruitment, retention, promotion, remuneration and staff well-being. The interdepartmental GSE Working Group reviews the effectiveness of GSE policies and strategies, supports institutional learning and coherence, and provides regular internal reporting. All staff are required to mainstream gender equality and foster an inclusive, gender-sensitive organizational culture. Dedicated resources are allocated for GSE coordination, audits and capacity development, with gender consultants engaged for project design and implementation as needed.

81. Helvetas is committed to diversity and inclusion, with a strong focus on advancing women within the organization. Gender-disaggregated workforce data – covering recruitment, retention, promotion, remuneration and benefits – are reviewed annually through the GSE headcount audit and human resources dashboards to inform management decisions and corrective actions. As at December 2025, women represented 57 per cent of staff at the Helvetas headquarters and 40.3 per cent across its country offices, with approximately 39 per cent of management positions held by women. Helvetas is implementing targeted initiatives, including women’s leadership training, women’s participation in local governance programmes and women’s political participation programmes, to expand equal opportunities for women and youth, increase representation in leadership and international roles, and address structural barriers to advancement.

82. Helvetas is committed to strengthening gender–climate synergies across its portfolio and has demonstrated a strong capacity to produce gender-focused and gender-mainstreamed knowledge products for internal learning, partner capacity development, advocacy and external communication. These publicly available resources – including gender assessments, annual reports, gender analysis toolkits and participatory gender audit guidance – demonstrate the

track record of Helvetas in promoting gender equity, strengthening social inclusion and enhancing community resilience to climate change.

83. The AP finds that the applicant's gender policy, procedures, capacities and competencies, supported by evidence of its track record, fully meet the updated GCF Gender Policy to the extent applicable to accreditation.

## IV. Conclusions and recommendation

### 4.1 Conclusions

84. Following the assessment of the applicant, the applicant is found to have the potential to support GCF in implementing its Strategic Plan for 2024–2027 with respect to:

- (a) Bringing complementarity to the existing GCF network of accredited entities, particularly through the applicant's broad geographical presence including in least developed countries, small island developing States, and African States;
- (b) Potential contribution to the adaptation and mitigation balance in the GCF portfolio since the applicant focuses on adaptation, mitigation, and cross-cutting activities and supporting diversity in GCF results areas;
- (c) Addressing the interests of particularly vulnerable groups and hardest-to-reach groups and communities; and
- (d) The indicative projects/programmes that the applicant intends to submit to GCF within the scope of the accreditation recommended by the AP in paragraph 86 below.

85. Following its assessment, the AP concludes the following in relation to the application with respect to the applicant's ability to meet the GCF accreditation standards identified in paragraph 14 above:

- (a) The applicant partially meets the requirements of the GCF basic fiduciary standards and fully meets, to the extent applicable to accreditation, the GCF Policy on the Protection of Whistleblowers and Witnesses, the GCF Policy on Prohibited Practices, the GCF AML/CFT Policy, the specialized fiduciary standard for project management and the specialized fiduciary standard for grant award and/or funding allocation mechanisms. The gaps relate to external quality assessment of the applicant's internal audit function and publication of the applicant's investigative guidelines and terms of reference of its investigative function. The gaps are identified in paragraphs 24 and 37 and are addressed by the corresponding conditions for accreditation in section 4.2 below;
- (b) The applicant fully meets the GCF revised Environmental and Social Policy (to the extent applicable to accreditation), the GCF interim ESS standards, and the GCF Information Disclosure Policy on disclosure of E&S information in relation to medium E&S risk (category B/I-2);
- (c) The applicant has demonstrated that it has the necessary policy, procedures and competencies to implement its gender policy, which is found to be consistent with the updated GCF Gender Policy to the extent applicable to accreditation, and has demonstrated that it has experience in gender consideration in the context of climate change; and
- (d) The applicant has demonstrated that it has institution-level systems, capacities and competencies regarding evaluation as required by the aforementioned GCF basic and

specialized fiduciary standards and interim ESS standards that would enable it to implement the Evaluation Policy for the GCF with regard to its GCF-funded activities.

## 4.2 Recommendation on accreditation

86. The AP recommends, for consideration by the Board, APL180 for accreditation as follows:

(a) **Accreditation type:**

(i) **Maximum size of an individual project or programme:** small;

(ii) **Fiduciary functions:**

(1) Basic fiduciary standards;

(2) Specialized fiduciary standard for project management;

(3) Specialized fiduciary standard for grant award and/or funding allocation mechanisms; and

(iii) **Maximum E&S risk category:** medium risk (category B/I-2).

(b) **Conditions:** the applicant will be required to submit to the AP, through the Secretariat, information on how it has complied with the conditions. The AP will thereafter assess whether the conditions have been met. This assessment will be communicated by the Secretariat, on behalf of the AP, to the Board for information purposes:

(i) Condition to be met by the applicant prior to the issuance by GCF of a certificate/confirmation of accreditation under the transitional arrangements adopted in paragraph (m) of decision B.42/13 (in connection with the revised accreditation framework adopted in paragraph (a) of decision B.42/13):

(1) Delivery to GCF by the applicant of evidence, in a form and substance satisfactory to the AP, of the publication on the applicant's website of the investigation guidelines in respect of prohibited practices, and terms of reference of the applicant's investigation function.

(ii) Condition to be met by the applicant prior to the submission of the first funding proposal to the Board:

(1) Delivery to GCF by the applicant of evidence, in a form and substance satisfactory to the AP, of an independent external quality assessment report and related action plan, conducted in accordance with the QAIP outlined in the applicant's internal audit policy, regarding the overall effectiveness of the applicant's internal audit function.

87. The applicant has been informed of the recommendation for accreditation, including the accreditation type and conditions, as identified in paragraph 86 above, and agrees to the recommendation.

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