



Digital Transformation



Strategic and Emergent Innovation



Results-based Management



Collaborative Culture

LEARNING AND INNOVATION STRATEGY 2021-2024

Addressing the complex challenges of a highly interconnected world – from community to global levels – can only be done through dialogue, exchange and collaboration.



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HELVETAS

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CONTEXT AND LESSONS LEARNED

Underlying Helvetas' vision of a just world is a set of core values aimed at inclusion, co-creation and shared ownership of solutions, all of which resonate strongly with **knowledge sharing, learning and innovation**.

Learning and innovation are best supported by bringing multiple perspectives together (from field experience, conceptual work, across disciplines), by articulating, discussing and confronting key challenges in collaborative ways, by facilitating and engaging in multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Based on these assumptions, the Learning and Innovation Strategy 2021-2024 builds upon lessons learned from the previous period (2015-2019) and draws recommendations for the upcoming period 2021-2024.

Lesson 1: Effective knowledge sharing and learning are more about individual competencies and behavior than they are about tools or approaches.

Lesson 2: Implementation without reflection is a significant barrier to learning.

Lesson 3: Our approach to the use of IT tools for virtual collaboration requires regular review.

Lesson 4: Our Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) requires a holistic approach, taking our processes, behaviors, methodologies and attitudes into account.

Lesson 5: Innovation needs to be steered to better serve organizational goals.

«Truly sustainable development is owned by those who are directly affected and must be driven by innovative and learning-oriented approaches.»

Helvetas Program 2021-2024

OUR OBJECTIVE & MILESTONES

Objective: Grounded by the competence and commitment to work in truly collaborative ways, in multistakeholder contexts and through the leveraging of relevant technologies, Helvetas staff, partners and primary stakeholders effectively share knowledge, collaborate, **learn and innovate** together, leading to higher levels of self-determination and sustainable development solutions.

What Learning means for us

Learning and competence building happen primarily through direct experience or through reflection on experience. It is the combination of concrete implementation, systematic observation of results and critical reflection on what worked, what did not and why that has the greatest learning potential. Learning is also a fundamentally social activity, where exchange of beliefs, ideas, perspectives and practice enrich everyone who is involved.

What Innovation means for us

Innovation is how we leverage our knowledge and learning to create new and better technical or methodological solutions or ways of working, which contribute to increased impact.

Helvetas recognizes an Innovation as a process or technology that benefits at least 10% of ongoing projects or 50,000 primary stakeholders or 20% of Helvetas staff globally.

Milestone 1: By 2024, a majority of HELVETAS staff recognize an improvement in their learning environment (meaningful exchange around topics of interest, mechanisms for reflection and incorporation of learning, access to relevant information, exposure to innovative ideas and practices).

Milestone 2: By 2024, at least 5 successful innovations (process or technology) each benefitting at least 10% of ongoing projects or 50,000 primary stakeholders have been implemented.

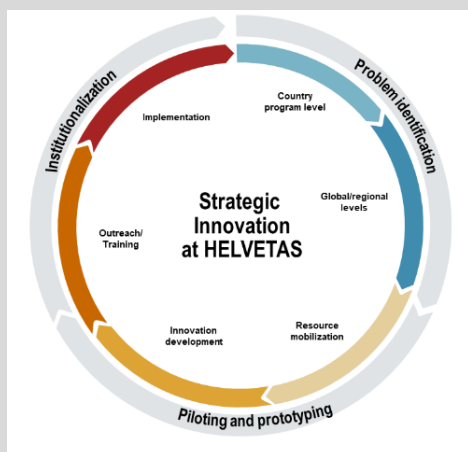
Milestone 3: By 2024, an organization wide digital Monitoring & Evaluation system has improved reliability and timeliness of data and increased efficiency and depth in data collection and analysis.

THE FOUR FOCUS AREAS

In the period 2021-2024, we continue to emphasize collaboration, participation, shared learning and innovation by focusing more on how we enable them in the organization and in our work with partners. To provide a frame for this, we have identified four Focus Areas.

Strategic & Emergent Innovation

Strategic Innovation is the use of targeted resources aimed at addressing specific challenges.



Emergent Innovation is the result of ongoing learning and individual or group insight into a new or improved way of doing things. Pre-conditions are its **recognition** – in order to both motivate staff and partners to continue to undertake innovative activity – and an **innovation-friendly environment** characterized by:

- a solid collaborative culture;
- decision-making processes that are open to new ideas;
- a tolerance for 'failure' (ie. unexpected results of innovation, which is inherently unpredictable).

How we will strengthen Strategic & Emergent Innovation

1. By creating an **Innovation Working Group (IWG)** of 6-8 members representing Helvetas globally, who will help create guiding documents and identify innovative ideas.
2. By developing an **Innovation Marketplace on Pamoja (intranet)**, which can also host biennial Innovation Fairs.
3. By building competencies in the use of **Design Thinking** and **Lean Innovation** methods to staff of strategic innovation projects.
4. By '**packaging**' and **marketing successful innovations**, identified by the IWG.

Collaborative Culture

Cultivating a Collaborative Culture within the organization and with partners will maximize learning in multiple directions, enable working across thematic and geographic areas, and invite free exchange across hierarchical levels. As a collaborative culture is created by the attitudes and working modes of people, we will support and encourage a culture of feedback and transparency, modelling by management and collaboration with partners.

How we will strengthen Collaborative Culture

1. By **building collaborative competencies** (WOL, use of virtual tools, facilitation skills), with this role increasingly being taken up by a peer support network made up of collaboration champions from each region.
2. By supporting a group of '**early adopters**' amongst **middle and senior management**, on WOL, cultivating a feedback culture, and using collaborative tools.
3. By identifying strategic partners with whom the pursuit of a **collaborative partnership culture** can be further developed.

Working out Loud (WOL) is a way to build a practical network of peers to tap into the collective wisdom of the group. When we share our strategies, proposals and workplans at early stages of development, we create opportunities for others to contribute meaningfully to them. At the same time, we share our ways of thinking and working, which can also be a learning experience for others. Over time, the habit of WOL can dramatically increase collaboration, learning and innovation.

Digital Transformation

To harness the potential of digital transformation, the LNI team will focus on the following objectives:



To foster a **digital culture** (that supports learning)



To **leverage digitalization** to increase efficiency and outreach in communication and marketing



To **use and promote** digital technologies in proficient ways.

How we will strengthen Digital Transformation

1. By including a core **digital literacy** element in our competence development efforts around strengthening our collaborative culture. This will be done by the Learning & Innovation, IT Services and Human Resources Development teams.
2. By transforming our overall approach to M&E within Helvetas through the **digital M&E initiative**.
3. By emphasizing **digital innovation** in our recognition and support of emergent and strategic innovation.

Results-based Management

We are motivated to use RBM as a way of working that enriches Project Cycle Management (PCM) and establishes a firm link between action and desired results, to fulfil the following accountability obligations:

- To ensure that our projects contribute to positive impact for primary stakeholders
- To make the best use of funds received from donors
- To work in transparent and collaborative ways with our implementing partners

Results-based Management (RBM) is an approach aimed at **realistic planning** for expected results, **monitoring progress** toward those results, **integrating lessons** learned into ongoing work and meaningful **reporting on performance**.



How we will strengthen Results-based Management

1. By continuing to **enhance PCM competence development**
2. By strengthening existing and as appropriate adding new processes aimed at **improving the link between planning & implementation and learning & innovation**
3. By supporting staff and partners in **reporting and linking M&E to outreach and communications** as well as country-specific and donor-related communication and knowledge products.

The full version of the Helvetas Learning & Innovation Strategy 2021-2024 is available [here](#).

For any further information, contact us at LNI@helvetas.org