

TRAC4Change

by HELVETAS



What is TRAC4Change?

TRAC4Change (Transformative Rural Access Catalyst for Change) is a division of Helvetas that draws on decades of experience focused on rural access in low-income countries across Asia, Africa, and Latin America to assist governments, private sector, and communities to create sustainable, cost-effective rural transport systems.

TRAC4Change's goal is to eliminate rural isolation and poverty by specializing in trail bridges, green roads, and systemic shifts that integrate rural infrastructure development for transformative change. A core team of institutional and technical experts, based in Nepal and Burkina Faso, oversees operations, designs projects, conducts assessments, scopes out initiatives, and builds partnerships.

We collaborate with governments, development organizations, academic institutions, donors, charities, foundations, and the private sector to form strategic partnerships to overcome rural isolation, ignite economic growth, and promote equitable development for all. With decades of experience in climate-resilient infrastructure, we share our knowledge, support policy development, and ensure high-quality construction.

We are committed to bridging the gap between rural and urban communities by providing sustainable, affordable, and reliable infrastructure solutions. Our focus is on building resilient transportation networks, such as roads and bridges, to connect isolated areas to markets, schools, healthcare facilities, and employment centers.

We create solutions by empowering governments and communities to build their capacities for transformative change. Our climate-resilient technology meets all engineering standards and is substantially more affordable than conventional options, making them ideal for countries with limited resources. Additionally, the technology is highly scalable, even in remote and underserved areas.

Our Vision

A world where all people, regardless of location or socioeconomic status, have **equal access** to essential services and economic opportunities for a better life.



Our Solution

In rural areas across the Global South, up to a billion people struggle to access markets, schools, healthcare, and jobs due to poor infrastructure. Rudimentary trails, roads, and bridges are often the only transportation options, leading to risky crossings, long commutes, and limited economic opportunities. This hampers economic growth, exacerbates food insecurity, and deepens inequality.

Investing in rural access, however, yields significant benefits.

The per capita cost for trail bridges is impressively low at just \$23.52, demonstrating how modest investments can lead to transformative results. By connecting remote communities to year-round access to roads, markets, and essential services, these bridges help boost incomes, enhance food security, support regular school attendance, and provide faster access to healthcare. Green roads offer similar benefits, with designs that prioritize ecological preservation.

Despite their lower cost, they don't hinder quality or scalability. These infrastructure solutions meet engineering standards, are easy to construct, and are highly scalable, even in remote and underserved areas. Beyond their direct benefits, trail bridges and green roads also create strong social and economic impacts, generating employment during construction. Each trail bridge can create approximately 2,500 person-days of work, while 20% of green road construction costs are earmarked for local labor.

Once completed, these new infrastructure projects promote sustainable development, aligning with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including poverty reduction, hunger eradication, health, education, gender equality, economic growth, infrastructure development, climate resilience, and universal access.





Case Study: Bridging the Gap: Cross-Cultural Strategies for Rural Connectivity

TRAC's decades of experience in Nepal can help influence rural connectivity throughout the Global South. For example, Nepal and Ethiopia share a challenge: geographic isolation. Their rugged terrains, rivers, and deep gorges hinder rural access to essential services and markets. And, only a fraction of the population in both countries (54.2% of Nepal and only 21.6% of Ethiopia) live within 2 kilometers of all-weather roads.

Trail bridges, however, offer a cost-effective and rapid solution to this isolation. And, through a combination of decades of providing technical assistance and strengthening government and private sector collaboration in Nepal, TRAC learned that Nepal could make substantial progress in reducing isolation via trail bridge construction. And, today, over 10,000 bridges are now in use by millions of people daily - raising household incomes by 22% following the construction of trail bridges. Through TRAC4Change, Helvetas is now transferring this knowledge and expertise to Ethiopia. By providing training, technology, and policy support, we're helping Ethiopia to jump-start development in years - not decades. In just two years, significant progress has been made, with over 100 government officials, private companies, and universities involved in the effort.

TRAC4Change's success is rooted in its collaborative approach. Experts from Nepal, like Mr. Pasang Sherpa (pictured above), have shared their invaluable knowledge to help Ethiopia develop a trail bridge program tailored to its specific cultural context. Our proven technology, combined with our team's extensive experience working in the Global South, has not only transformed rural communities but has also strengthened cultural and professional ties between Nepal and Ethiopia.

Demonstrated Impact from scaling Rural Access



Trail bridges reduced travel time by **2 hours**, enabling safer, faster, and year-round access to communities in **Ethiopia**



Household income boosted by **25%** in Burkina Faso due to **green rural roads** and **22%** in Nepal due to **trail bridges**



31.5% rise in safe deliveries at birthing centers after trail bridge construction in **Ethiopia**

The Economic Payoff of Our Approach

4.5x
Return on Investment

TRAC4Change's' approach is a highly effective, cost-efficient, and scalable solution with significant social and economic benefits. With a Benefit-Cost-ratio of 4.5, trail bridges offer an exceptional return on investment, delivering USD 4.50 in socio-economic benefits for every dollar spent. Also, a 19% Internal Rate of Return suggests strong long-term economic benefits for both individuals and the region. Green roads provide a cost-effective and environmentally friendly alternative, reducing construction and maintenance costs. Both options contribute to climate resilience and offer a catalytic solution for policymakers seeking to enhance rural development and close the rural connectivity gap.

PARTNER & GET INVOLVED

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