



HAND IN HAND
INTERNATIONAL



On the Farm and Beyond

Growing Hand in Hand's capacity for impact through sustainable agriculture

From October 2020 to December 2023, the IKEA Foundation supported Hand in Hand (HiH) to build the resources, skills and tools needed to adopt regenerative agricultural practices within its enterprise creation model. In this final report, HiH provides an overview of what was achieved and what has been learnt in relation to the three agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

KPI 1

Development of an organisational strategy and dedicated training tools to introduce regenerative agriculture and circularity in target communities.

This indicator will demonstrate that Hand in Hand's organisational capacity and internal expertise has increased. We will have succeeded when we have the capability to generate and share evidence-based best practices from our regenerative agriculture activities.

KPI 2

Uptake of CE&RA practices, measured through adoption by members and identification of best practices by Hand in Hand.

The indicator will provide a proof of concept, assessing whether the practical application of Hand in Hand's regenerative agriculture and circularity model works, based on its adoption by members.

KPI 3

Increased community-based advocacy for adoption of CE&RA practices and natural resource management, as a sustainable and profitable economic activity.

This indicator seeks to demonstrate Hand in Hand's ability to support grassroots advocacy.



Executive summary

As an organisation and network, HiH has made significant progress in supporting smallholder farmers to achieve both business and environmental success. We are proud of the achievements we have made in:

1. **Building institutional capacity (KPI 1):** we have enhanced our institutional capacity to deliver regenerative agriculture projects. We are now supporting 16,000 farmers in establishing sustainable and profitable enterprises based on regenerative principles.
2. **Promoting practice adoption (KPI 2):** Our direct training programme has yielded promising results, with pilot farmers making notable progress towards agroecological transition with a 155% average income uplift.
3. **Grassroot advocacy development (KPI 3):** We have empowered 41 Champions to advocate for positive change within their communities.

These achievements have contributed to the creation of a business case for smallholder farmers transition to regenerative agriculture. While acknowledging that some of objectives were ambitious for the project's timeframe, we are excited to continue our growth in the regenerative agriculture space and solidify our business case.

What went well

Looking back at where we were three years ago, we are proud of the progress we have made across our three KPIs. For an overview of the KPIs please consult the cover page.

KPI 1 Internal development and mainstreaming of CERA approach

Developing the CERA strategy for HIH Eastern Africa enabled us to accomplish two key objectives. First, it prompted us to extend our focus beyond basic climate resilience practices and explore opportunities to assist farmers in a more ambitious regenerative transition. This incorporated a specific emphasis on ensuring women's inclusion at all levels. Second, it heightened internal awareness of the significance of CERA approaches and identified a cohort of internal stakeholders dedicated to embedding the strategy across the organisation. Many of these stakeholders continue to be actively involved in the CERA working group.

Following the launch of the CERA Strategy, both HIH Eastern Africa and International revised their organisational strategies to incorporate regenerative agriculture goals. By 2027, HiH collectively aims to support 75,000 farmers in kickstarting their transition to regenerative agriculture through two project types:

- **Seeds of Change (Level 1 projects):** HIH has updated its core model to include a module on regenerative agriculture and circular economy. By introducing regenerative agriculture practices from the outset, farmers are supported to establish sustainable and profitable enterprises based on regenerative



principles. These projects have commenced in Kenya and Tanzania, reaching approximately 16,000 farmers to date.

- *Roots for Transformation (Level 2)*: HiH will enhance and replicate the pilot project with 2,000 farmers in Busia and Bomet. The objective is to support graduates of Level 1 projects to fully embrace CERA principles and transition to regenerative enterprises. This will ensure the model is validated before potentially scaling up. It will also be an opportunity to assess the sustainability of our intervention, as we will collect additional data from the initial pilot.

External collaboration and knowledge sharing

Since inception, HiH has been known for its core livelihoods approach. In the past three years, we have expanded our presence in the regenerative agriculture sector by collaborating with partners, expanding our network, and learning from others. We are now part of networks such as Intersectoral Forum on Agroecology and Agrobiodiversity (ISFAA), Participatory Ecological Land Use Management Kenya (PELUM), and the EverGreening Alliance. We have also begun developing a network of peers to share experiences and challenges, and have actively participated in events such as COP28 to showcase our progress and future plans. Through these interactions, we have laid the groundwork for Hand in Hand to be recognised as a promoter and implementer of regenerative agriculture, while learning from others and better understanding our unique selling proposition (USP). Key feedback and learnings include:

1. HiH's direct engagement with smallholder farmers, departing from conventional 'train the trainer' approaches, acknowledges the diverse nature of regenerative agriculture. Our practical approach, blending theory with demonstration, ensures farmers receive tailored support to select and implement regenerative practices suited to their farms, thereby fostering long-term sustainability.
2. While the Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE) is not widely used, organisations are developing their own methodologies to track farmers' transition to regeneration. Consolidating our expertise in using TAPE is ongoing, and sharing our experiences and challenges can be valuable for others, potentially leading to a more consistent and inclusive methodology for the sector.

KPI 2 Training

In September 2022, HiH began training 1,948 graduates of its core model. This included grouping them into clusters to facilitate collective training and foster support networks for sharing experiences. Each cluster received 12 months of training on the newly developed CERA curriculum, mixing theoretical learning and practical demonstrations on community demo-plots, along with two visits to HiH's permanent demo farms. Recognizing the context specificity of regenerative agriculture, and the importance of providing individualised support to each farmer, trainers subsequently conducted a coaching visit with each participant. To ensure the sustainability of farmers' enterprises post-exit, HiH also facilitated the creation and strengthening of Community Based Organisations (CBOs).



Our endline evaluation has shown compelling short-term results, with farmers making consistent progress in their transition to agroecology (for full analysis please see Annex 1 – Endline Evaluation). More specifically:

- Farms transitioned from an overall CAET score of 42.6% (non-agroecological) at baseline, to 71% - just above the upper threshold of the transition to advanced agroecological stage;
- Soil health on the farms is moving in a positive direction, with a Soil Health Index score from 3 (non-desirable) to 3.9 (acceptable);
- Farmers adopted 4 to 10 regenerative agriculture practices (from 0-3 at baseline);
- Incomes increased by an average of 155%.

Demo-farms

As part of the pilot, HiH established two permanent demo-farms to showcase model agroecological farms to project participants and surrounding communities. Upon acquisition of the land, the plot in Busia was uncultivated, while the one in Bomet was farmed using conventional methods - monoculture cropping with intensive use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides.

By project's end, achievements include:

- Both demo-farms achieved their medium-term objectives (see Annex 2 - Demo Farm Roadmap);
- Demo-farms transitioned from an overall CAET score of 30% (41% for Bomet and 19% Busia) at baseline, to 68% (69% Bomet and 68% Busia) at endline;
- Soil Health Index scores reaching an acceptable level on both demo-farms.

KPI 3 Grassroots advocacy

Upon recruitment, 41 Champions received training from HiH staff to deepen their understanding of CERA, build their knowledge of advocacy techniques, and grasp how to break gender barriers with the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) methodology. Champions were also introduced to partners to boost their confidence and skills. Officers from the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries and PELUM Kenya provided additional training in agroecological concepts and advocacy skills. From January 2023 onwards Champions began promoting the adoption of regenerative agriculture in both counties through radio shows, community awareness meetings and participation in County Integrated Development Plans (CIDP).

By the end of December 2023, key results include:

- Recruitment and training of 41 Grassroot Advocacy Champions;
- Radio shows reached a cumulative listenership of approximately 3.6M, with each show averaging 400,000 listeners;



- Busia Champions participated in the CIDP formulation advocating for subsidized organic fertilizer and strategic markets for farm produce to promote affordable and attractive organic farming. The County Government has committed to subsidizing agricultural inputs such as food crops, and promoting the adoption of climate smart agricultural technologies.
- Community awareness meetings reached 3,224 individuals across Bomet and Busia (66% of whom were new to Hand in Hand).

National engagement

We have contributed to the development of the National Agroecology for Food Transformation Strategy, currently undergoing public consultation before submission to the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development.

What proved challenging

We had ambitious goals for a three-year project and the results have been mixed. While we have made progress in some areas, we also recognize those where achievements have been partial and require further development. For a RAG reflection of progress against outcomes, please see Annex 3 – RAG overview.

Methodology

At project start, HiH lacked clarity on the most effective indicators for monitoring farmers' transition to regeneration. Initially we planned to focus solely on practice adoption. Following consultations with Dr. Pablo Tittonell, HiH decided to adapt the TAPE framework for its ability to capture changes both on the social and environmental levels. We conducted baseline, midline and endline evaluations on 226 farms in Busia and Bomet capturing comprehensive information across the 10 elements of agroecology. This provided a detailed overview of participants' journeys to regenerative farms. While the data indicates a positive direction of change among pilot farmers, we encountered challenges.

Due to time constraints and the need for agroecological expertise, trainers were tasked with collecting TAPE. Data collection involved participatory farm walks and observations, with trainers working in pairs to mitigate bias. However, ensuring consistency in trainer pairs across baseline, midline, and endline visits proved challenging, potentially leading to data inconsistencies. The short timeframe between the baseline assessment in August 2022 and the endline evaluation in December 2023 may have amplified the influence of methodological bias on the results, especially when compared to what could have been observed with a longer interval between assessments. In longer-term projects, the impact of such bias tends to be minimal, as changes become more visible over time. Finally, the evaluations were collected in different seasons and at different points of the agricultural cycle, which may have further influenced results.

The likelihood of methodological inconsistencies, coupled with the rich individual information that TAPE provides, highlights the need for HiH to fine-tune and verify our implementation of TAPE.



What's next?

In the Roots for Transformation validation phase, HiH will focus on strengthening our evidence by:

- 1) Continuing to improve our data collection systems: HiH will provide ongoing support to trainers on effectively utilizing TAPE and will further adapt the tool to enhance its ease of use (i.e. integration of reference pictures and videos, and more comprehensive questions);
- 2) Exploring data validation methods: HiH has been in conversations with satellite providers and platforms (Restor, Atlas AI, and Downforce Technologies) to determine their potential for tracking changes on farmers' land, considering the diverse location and small size of their land, and validating the direction of change indicated by our TAPE results. Soil testing is also under consideration, and feasibility assessments are ongoing.
- 3) Integrating TAPE in the CERA curriculum: Given the detailed individual information collected by TAPE, it is a valuable tool for farmers to holistically assess their own farms and monitor changes in soil health to inform decisions. In the long term, a participatory approach may be the most cost-effective use of the methodology.

We still view TAPE as a uniquely comprehensive methodology, and a valuable addition to our core business and income indicators when monitoring progress of CERA projects. Further, it can eventually contribute to the global TAPE monitoring community and its public resources. With numerous frameworks emerging to monitor sustainable agriculture projects, HiH also recognizes the value we can offer by sharing our experiences with this methodology, including the challenges encountered and the opportunity it presents. Our first step will be organizing a learning workshop for the conclusion of this project, where we will invite advocates of different methodologies to delve into the complexities of measuring regenerative agriculture interventions. We look forward to further discussing this with the Foundation.

Demo-farms

Anecdotal feedback indicates that farmers have found the permanent demo-farms useful in understanding the holistic management of a regenerative farm and practically applying regenerative agriculture practices. However, the delays experienced in land acquisition and set-up, meant that our vision for demo-farms to act as training centers for the farmers and, in the long run, to sustainably generate income to cater for farm related expenses could not be achieved. More time is needed to understand the sustainability and scalability of owning demo-farms.

What's next?



We are currently operating our permanent demo-farms as enterprises, and they are beginning to generate revenues. However, further time is required for them to become self-sustaining and establish themselves as knowledge hubs within their communities. In the meantime, farmers in the surrounding communities and from HiH's projects in Bomet and Busia will benefit from visiting them for demonstrations.

While the vision remains unchanged, the pathway to achieving it is proving to be longer than anticipated. Over the next two years, we will also have the opportunity to fully compare the approach of purchasing demo-farms to leasing land for a few years, as other projects come to end.

Beyond the farm

Going “beyond the farm” and developing markets systems conducive to regenerative practices and circular value chains has been the area of the project we have progressed the least. With a limited timeframe, the project focused primarily on HiH's organisational development and ensuring training for farmers was interactive and effective. In the second half of the project, the focus turned more to advocacy and awareness raising, as well as strengthening pathways for aggregation and marketing via traditional means – i.e. through CBOs and Cooperatives. While this means we had to significantly reduce our ambitions of developing regenerative market systems, our endline data highlighted that for our target farmers, reduced costs and product diversification – spurred by regenerative practices – lead to increased incomes despite participation in existing/traditional value chains. The sustainability of this trends is something we want to better understand in our Roots for Transformation project.

What's next?

Moving forward, HiH remains committed to the 'beyond the farm' element. The feasibility and potential benefits of establishing circular value chains by HiH will need to be thoroughly assessed in future interventions. Currently, premium markets for regenerative agriculture products are not available in Busia and Bomet. While there has been interest expressed by the county governments in exploring this avenue, it will take time to materialise.

HiH aims to address this challenge by organizing Field Days at the permanent demo-farms for future participants and pilot farmers. These events will serve as platforms to connect farmers with consumers, highlighting the numerous benefits of regeneratively grown products. HiH will also explore partnerships that could facilitate access to premium markets located further away, potentially at reduced cost through facilitated transportation and packaging arrangements (i.e. Till App).

Advocacy

Grassroots advocacy is a new venture for HiH. It was integrated into the pilot project to foster a supportive environment for the adoption of CERA practices, both locally and nationally. This project gave us the space to evaluate current influence



pathways in counties where we operate and identify policy spaces where we could facilitate change. We are pleased our initial progress, supporting grassroots champions and empowering farmers to speak for themselves. Some of their key activities are listed above. Additionally, we established partnerships at the national level, enabling our participation in the technical working group for the development of the first national agroecology strategy.

At the same time, it has taken time for HiH to shift from a culture of mobilisation and awareness raising, to one of effective influence. We remain committed to facilitating grassroots advocacy, but also recognise that we may need to complement this with a more active role at regional and national levels. This project has also demonstrated that we perhaps have more of a role to play as thought leaders – via research and evidence from our projects – than as activists.

What's next?

We will continue our grassroots community activities, empowering and training local Champions. In future projects we will build in more tailored measures of success, to be able to show consistent progress for greater awareness and application of regenerative practices in vulnerable communities.

We will also further develop our knowledge and expertise of effective advocacy, while refining and verifying our results, evidence and learnings. We see this as a crucial contribution to national and international debates, and to strengthening our overall business case for regenerative agriculture.

Additionally, HiH will keep engaging with partners in networks advocating for the transition to agriculture in Kenya and beyond. As our evidence base grows, we aim to step up our recommendations, and facilitate platforms for smallholders themselves to expand the movement towards sustainable agriculture.

Women

Across all HiH's projects, the overarching goal is poverty alleviation through sustainable enterprise development. We are encouraged by a 155% average income uplift, particularly noting the significant rise in on-farm enterprises' income by 155% compared to 36% for off-farm enterprises. However, men experienced a slightly greater income uplift (169%) compared to women (152%) with men continuing to earn more in absolute terms (Ksh18,000/month vs Ksh11,000). Moreover, indicators of women's decision-making show no major improvement – the percentage of women participating in household and business decisions has decreased or remained constant from baseline to endline evaluations.

This shows an ongoing disparity between male and female smallholder farmers. While women have clearly benefited from the project, our initial ambition to address gender barriers for our participants, particularly women, has seen only partial success. Feedback from participants continues to highlight discrepancies in access to and ownership of land, businesses and services between men and women, with women reporting full ownership of certain farm activities.



What's next?

Despite significant income gains, gender-specific challenges persist and are hard to shift in a three-year timeframe. Recognising the complex interplay between gender dynamics and societal norms, HiH is committed to further integrating gender considerations into its programming and organizational culture. As a complement to organisational mainstreaming and the roll out of gender methodologies such as Oxfam's GALS, we have developed a comprehensive Gender Strategy to better embed gender throughout HiH's operations and programmes.

Key recommendations from the strategy include:

- Revisiting training curricula to include the delivery of Gender Action Learning System (GALS) to all project participants. In the pilot only Champions were trained due to time constraints.
- Create a pathway for members to access more women-friendly financial products, enhance market access initiatives, and foster multi-stakeholder dialogues aimed at closing the gender gap further.

Sustainability

Assessing the sustainability of a project within three years is challenging. Additionally, Covid-19 and staff turnover delayed the implementation period. While the endline feedback from farmers highlights significant enthusiasm for CERA and their commitment to continuing regenerative agriculture practices, fully determining the sustainability of the intervention post-exit remains elusive.

Most farmers expressed a strong preference for regenerative practices over conventional methods. They cited observations of neighbours using conventional techniques experiencing lower yields and crops appearing less healthy compared to their own. However, despite this conviction, some farmers noted potential temptations if offered free chemical inputs. Concerns about labour intensity of CERA practices and the need for a reliable cash flow were listed as reasons for being tempted to utilise those inputs on a portion of their land.

What's next?

In addition to our intensified focus on methodology, our plans for Roots for Transformation involve revisiting pilot farmers at least one year after project completion. During this ex-post study, we will track their progress, evaluate the continuity of their transition to regenerative agriculture, and assess whether they have expanded the portion of their land under regeneration. This process will deepen our understanding of the long-term impact of our project and inform future plans.