Hand in Hand works with entrepreneurship as an effective, long-term, and sustainable method to fight poverty.
Every year Hand in Hand compiles a report on the impact of its work at the request of Giva Sverige (the Swedish Fundraising Association). Reflecting over what we have done during the past year generates valuable lessons learned. 2020 has been quite different from the previous years, marked by greater difficulties and challenges than ever before. Hand in Hand has witnessed how small companies have been forced to close, to adapt, and attempt to restart. The most important task for Hand in Hand has been to listen to our partner organisations and deliver support rapidly where it is most needed. This might entail training in alternative business areas, such as the manufacture of masks or disinfectants, or providing health information via text messaging.

Despite all the external challenges, our long-term work to strengthen people’s economic and social resilience has continued. Hand in Hand has been able to provide support to new projects and our model for social mobilisation, training, and entrepreneurship has withstood the tests. Self-Help groups have proven to be key in preventing structures from collapsing under the pressure of the pandemic. During the year, roughly 351,000 businesses have started or grown stronger. We know that small businesses owners have gained knowledge, pride, and a stronger capacity to influence their lives, actions that make their situation easier in difficult times.

The evaluation of our project to strengthen women’s position in Madhya Pradesh, India has shown that, even if incomes decreased during the pandemic, 96% of the women believe that they have been impacted less than neighbours who did not participate in the project. We see clearly how our work contributes to building resilience to various unexpected challenges.

STINA GÖTBRINK
Secretary-General, Hand in Hand Sweden
Hand in Hand Sweden is a registered charity in Sweden. We work through our partner organisations, Hand in Hand India, Hand in Hand Eastern Africa, and Hand in Hand Zimbabwe towards our objective of reducing poverty in the world. Hand in Hand also has partner organisations in Afghanistan and Cambodia.

For whom do we work and why?
Hand in Hand’s vision is a world without poverty. There are many reasons that people live in poverty; the absence of opportunities to make a livelihood and a sufficient income are central causes. However, poverty has many other dimensions such as limited freedom and influence on one’s life situation, lack of access to both health care and education, as well as personal safety and security.

Hand in Hand is active in geographical areas where there exists a severe lack of opportunities to make a livelihood and levels of unemployment are high. Women are our main target group, as well as young people living on less than $3.20 per day. Women play a crucial role in creating sustainable societies and in fighting poverty. When they gain greater economic and social status, there are positive effects on the family and society. Children can attend school, health status improves, and women are able to take control over their own lives. Pride, self-esteem, and belief in the future among the people we reach with our work are further positive effects.

Our methodology and theory of change
Hand in Hand works with entrepreneurship as an effective, long-term, and sustainable method to fight poverty. We believe that everyone has their own individual competence and a desire to develop. With the right tools and support, many more individuals can create new opportunities for a stable livelihood and a more secure future.

Our focus is on mobilising, educating, and training women and young people so that they can increase their income through entrepreneurship. This enhances their ability to provide for themselves and their families and build up a buffer so they can withstand future shocks. Understanding markets, business training, and marketing skills are some of the components of entrepreneurship training. The concept of saving is also encouraged early on. If necessary, Hand in Hand can offer small loans or contacts with microfinance institutions so that entrepreneurs can mobilise capital to invest in growing their businesses. In order for the small businesses to grow and develop in a stable fashion, Hand in Hand also works to strengthen value chains – suppliers and customers – and thereby even entrepreneurs’ roles in the marketplace.

The Self-Help groups function as a democratic and social platform, making it possible to address even other social issues, such as child labour, access to health care, the environment, discrimination, and local democracy.
The objective of our activities is to strengthen individual’s capacity to provide for themselves. Our methodology includes social mobilisation through Self-Help groups, as well as education and entrepreneurship training. The future entrepreneurs are given knowledge on how loans work and they learn to save. In addition, we enable better access to microfinance and to markets for sourcing intermediary goods and for selling goods and services. Poverty is, however, multi-dimensional and the underlying factors are often interlinked. This is why we always include complementary measures in our programmes.

The starting point for our programmes is every individual’s human rights. Our target groups are often marginalised. Their voices are not heard and their civil rights are often violated. Participants in our programmes are also educated in human rights and civil rights. They learn how to demand that their rights be respected as well as which social institutions have a responsibility to respect and enforce them.

We have developed our programme methodology in co-operation with people living in poverty. It has proven to have a good impact in terms of generating both the knowledge and courage necessary to build up micro-businesses and create jobs. We also know that social mobilisation in Self-Help groups generates greater self-confidence, innovation, and bravery, as well as better leadership. These are crucial factors both in starting small businesses and for engaging in local decision-making processes. These measures collectively contribute to increasing entrepreneurs’ ability to make a living, handle crises, and protect their own interests.

During 2020, we have witnessed a continued need to integrate environmental issues and climate change into our programmes. A number of our projects encompass sustainable agricultural practices, sustainable use of natural resources and water, circular economy, and recycling into participants’ business models.

The “Village Projects” are part of one of our larger programmes. Over 2 ½ years, the Village Projects have invested in entrepreneurship, economic independence, and sustainable development within defined geographical areas. When the Self-Help groups start or grow, new businesses are born and jobs are created. This leads to positive developments for the whole village.

Our programmes are made possible thanks to financial support from private donors, institutions, and organisations, such as the Swedish Postcode Lottery, Läkarmissionen, Forum Civ, and Radiohjälpen.
Hand in Hands works with several of the global Sustainable Development Goals; however, we focus particularly on Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 5 (Gender Equality), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and Goal 17 (Partnership for the Goals).

Hand in Hand’s work also has a positive impact on several other Sustainable Development Goals.
CHALLENGES DUE TO COVID-19

The pandemic has had enormous consequences on the world economy, our programme countries, as well as on the entrepreneurs that are trained by Hand in Hand. According to UNDP, human development has declined for the first time since 1998. An additional 150 million people risk falling into extreme poverty during 2021. The ILO estimates that incomes have decreased by 60% for the 1.6 billion people working in the informal sector. Women and young people are particularly vulnerable as they often have less job security and are more frequently employed in the informal sector. Women’s independence has been weakened by the pandemic. Violence against girls and women in the home has increased and access to sexual and reproductive health has decreased.

The majority of the entrepreneurs that are trained by Hand in Hand live under, or just above, the poverty line. They have little or no resilience for managing periods with severe setbacks. They have been doubly affected by the pandemic. They must prevent both their families and themselves from becoming infected as they have extremely limited access to adequate health care. Most of all, however, many have been affected by the strict restrictions which have entailed limited mobility, as well as closed borders, markets, and schools. The effects of this include more expensive transportation, reduced access to intermediary goods and interruptions in remittances from migrant workers. The markets they sell their goods on have become fewer and smaller and relevant value chains have been interrupted. An evaluation conducted in Kenya during May, found that entrepreneurs had lost 67% of their revenue, and that one in four businesses had closed. The lack of economic resilience has forced many entrepreneurs to sell off their means of production or capital goods. Some entrepreneurs have, however, been able to retool and even contribute to reducing the transmission of the virus by selling protective equipment.

Even before the pandemic, the lack of jobs and livelihoods was palpable in the countries where Hand in Hand operates. 1.7 million Kenyans lost their jobs during the year. Unemployment has exploded in India and in April 120 million persons were without a job. However, there has been some recovery since then, primarily in the informal sector and in agriculture. There is a lack of reliable statistics from Zimbabwe, regardless, unemployment is still sky-high.
Hand in Hand in the fight against COVID-19

Hand in Hand managed to mobilise resources quickly to contribute to the fight against the pandemic. The first activities were launched in March. Our focus was on contributing to spreading information to prevent the spread of the virus, contributing with equipment to local health care facilities, as well as mitigating the economic effects of the pandemic.

ZIMBABWE

The activities involved disseminating correct information about the virus, distributing protective equipment to local health care workers, as well as on campaigns to prevent domestic violence. Hand in Hand participated in the government’s civil contingencies work in seven districts for three months. Hand in Hand Zimbabwe’s projects supported 6,000 health care workers and 55 local health clinics. Altogether, our activities reached 174,500 persons living in the countryside.

KENYA

Through our work we have contributed to spreading information about COVID-19, as well as how to prevent its transmission. Through our strong presence in the field, we were able to assist the government and health care professionals in collecting current, updated data from the field. The entrepreneurs also received extra advisory services for their businesses. Our activities reached roughly 400,000 persons.

INDIEN

Our focus was on providing access to correct information as well as supplying local health clinics with protective equipment, such as disinfectants, soap, and protective clothing. Free telephone advisory services were put in place for the residents of Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh. Our information activities reached around 125,000 households.

The pandemic’s effects on our work

The pandemic has brought about severe difficulties and challenges for Hand in Hand’s work in our programme countries. Our activities are normally carried out through a strong presence in the field. As a result of concern about contributing to increasing the spread of the virus, and due to the various restrictions put in place by the governments, we have not been able to carry on with business as usual. Our activities in India and Kenya were impacted the most and we moved towards using online resources and, in some cases, we paused our activities. Many activities could, thankfully, be resumed during the latter part of the year. We were able to continue with our programmes in Zimbabwe, subject to a few restrictions.

What type of resources does Hand in Hand have access to?

During 2020, Hand in Hand in Sweden had an average of 15 employees. In addition, we have four volunteers working regularly in the organisation.

The Stockholm-based team works on raising donations, programme development, monitoring, evaluations, and communications. Our staff ensures the quality of our programmes through on-going dialog with our partner organisations and through field visits. Hand in Hand takes a systematic approach to developing its operations and adapting them to both local and global contexts. This has been especially important during 2020.

Hand in Hand works with a number of companies that provide free or sponsored services in the areas of organisational development, marketing, IT, and facilities for events.

HAND IN HAND SWEDEN’S PARTNER ORGANISATIONS INCLUDE:
(NumberOf employees)

Hand in India 1260
Hand in Hand Eastern Africa 250
Hand in Hand Afghanistan 150
Hand in Hand Zimbabwe 120
Hand in Hand International 13
Hand in Hand Sweden 15
HOW DOES HAND IN HAND SPREAD ITS MESSAGE?

Hand in Hand spreads information on developments in the countries in which we operate and how our activities contribute to reducing poverty. We want to call attention to the relationship between entrepreneurship, livelihoods, job creation, gender equality, development, and democracy. We do this through social media, our home page, and events, as well as through publicity in the mass media and through our donors and their networks.

During 2020, it was necessary to revise our communications plan on a monthly basis. We were forced to postpone a number of planned events and activities and our charity campaigns took the form of crisis communication.

We worked through continuous communication with our existing donors, updating them on the situation in our programme countries in respect to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We launched a specific campaign with the aim of increasing awareness of, and engagement in, Global Goal number 17, Sweden’s least well-known sustainability goal. The campaign included communication with sustainability managers, live webinars, and a campaign on LinkedIn. We have substantially increased our visibility in online channels, in particular during our 2020 Christmas campaign in which nearly 400,000 persons were reached by our advertising on social media. We increased the traffic to our home page by reaching out in local newspapers, emails, on the radio, as well as through online advertising. Our following on LinkedIn increased by nearly 60%.
EXAMPLES OF RESULTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Hand in Hand measures and evaluates its progress

We use a variety of indicators to measure what Hand in Hand Sweden and our partner organisations have accomplished in each of our partner countries. These include:

- The number of Self-Help groups that have started or been strengthened
- The number of members in the Self-Help groups
- The number of businesses that have started or been strengthened
- The number of jobs created or improved

Every partner organisation reports monthly to Hand in Hand Sweden and the results are published on our home page. We also measure economic and social indicators such as the change in income levels, increased standards of living, access to sanitation, improved health outcomes, quality of life, access to health care, as well as women’s status in the family and local community.

Hand in Hand studies the changes taking place in local communities - citizens’ participation in democratic processes and local decision-making bodies, as well as monitoring societal development in general.

Internal evaluations are carried out regularly by Hand in Hand Sweden and our partner organisations. We also use external organisations and chartered auditors to evaluate our programmes and projects, and the quality of the data reported.

The evaluations of our operations are tools for monitoring and learning. Their focus lies on understanding the effects of our activities and how they change and improve participants’ lives. In this report, we have chosen to share and highlight some examples of results and lessons learned.
The impact of Hand in Hand Eastern Africa’s operations

According to an overall evaluation of Hand in Hand’s operations in eastern Africa, our programmes have provided the entrepreneurs we have trained with increased knowledge, helped them to develop new skills, and establish more sustainable relationships with the market. This has in turn led to increased incomes, better housing, greater access to education, more nutritious food, and access to health care for families.

Hand in Hand’s work has contributed to fundamental change. Thanks to new knowledge and skills acquired, participants have gained courage and created opportunities to secure a livelihood. Long-term success is, however, threatened by negative market structures (such as powerful middle men) that keep people in poverty.

The impact evaluation also shows that Hand in Hand Eastern Africa is successful at supporting people so they can take better advantage of opportunities. The activities reviewed have proven to be relevant and well adapted to participants’ varying levels of literacy, technological skills, and group affiliation. Hand in Hand co-operates with governments, other public bodies, and various organisations, thus ensuring the projects have a local foundation and impact.


Village Project – An example from the village of Kiboko in Kenya

The Village Project was carried out over the course of 27 months in Kiboko, from 2015 to 2017. The objective was to contribute to increased incomes among the 450 inhabitants and thereby reduce poverty and increase the standard of living. In 2020, Lind Invest carried out an evaluation of the project’s economic and social returns in a Social Return on Investment Study. By comparing data collected at the start of the project with data collected after its completion, the following results were identified:

- 225 businesses were established and survived; 225 participants became entrepreneurs
- 20 existing businesses grew
- 21 village inhabitants were hired by the newly started businesses
- 164 new participants began saving for the first time
- 414 became members of a Self-Help group, through which they were able to access knowledge and advice locally
- Incomes increased by 296%
- Savings increased by 166%

The study showed that, for every Kenyan Shilling that was invested in the Kiboko Project, a social and economic value equivalent to 32.88 Shillings was created for the participants and the local community.
Motivated and Entrepreneurial Youth, Zimbabwe

The three-year project, MEY (Motivated and Entrepreneurial Youth – Leading Stars for the Future of Zimbabwe) encompassed three components: entrepreneurship (including microfinance), life skills/motivation, and health. These elements complement each other.

The final evaluation showed that, after three years, all the young people that had participated in the project were engaged in some form of income-generating activity, such as gardening, farming poultry, or goat husbandry. The small businesses had started generating income, and some of the young people that had not started their own businesses, were employed in the other participants’ businesses. Lack of access to capital was the greatest obstacle among those that had started businesses.

The project contributed to the start of 1,654 small businesses and the creation of 1,907 jobs. These results well surpass the project’s goals – by 165% and 190%, respectively.

The young people interviewed in conjunction with the evaluation confirmed that they had gained knowledge from the courses, built self-confidence, reduced engagement in risky behaviours, and improved their financial management. They also maintained that the project had given them the strength and opportunity to start their own income-generating ventures. Young women gained a stronger voice in the family and the local community.


Women’s empowerment and entrepreneurship, India

The evaluation of the project focused on women’s empowerment and entrepreneurship in Madhya Pradesh, India found that average incomes among the most vulnerable had doubled. The aim of the project was to provide women with basic literacy, entrepreneurship skills, and increased power over their lives.

Using Self-Help as a driving force, marginalised women had gained the necessary skills to start and run microbusinesses. This has led to a significant increase in their incomes. In addition to the material advantages, the women have become more apt to participate in discussions on women’s rights in relation to issues such as ending domestic violence, health, and sexual and reproductive rights. They have increased their self-confidence in contacts with government agencies on issues including property rights, public benefits, and services such as water, roads, and sewage.

Women are significant contributors to the family income in 70% of the households. Families’ average incomes have doubled over the course of the project. Over 85% of the women are now running a microbusiness and nearly all (98%) conclude that the family’s income has increased as a result of the project. Even though the pandemic has had a negative effect on incomes, 96% of the women maintain that they have been less affected than their neighbours that had not participated in the project.

Children and education in India

India is one of the world’s “youngest” countries, with 365 million inhabitants aged 10-24. As a result, an enormous potential can be unleashed if children have the opportunity to get an education. Many children lack the opportunity to attend school, or they have to drop out to contribute to providing for their families.

The Child Labour Elimination and Education Programme makes it possible for children to get an education instead of working.

Intensive instruction is provided in special schools, in order for the most marginalised children to catch up with their education. In addition to the academic tuition, the children grow both physically, and psychologically. In this way, Hand in Hand’s schools help these children to a healthier life. After one and a half to two years, the children are phased into regular schools. Hand in Hand continues to support them in their new schools and home environment.

Since its start in 2004, the programme has contributed to eradicating child labour in 1,142 Indian villages, and providing over 332,000 children with access to education. During 2020, around 500 children were attending Hand in Hand’s boarding schools.

Kemala Kullaivan is one of the children which has transferred to a regular class after attending boarding school. She comes from one of India’s many minority groups. Her parents laboured as poorly-paid “carriers” and she spent her days attending to the cows.

“At school, I learned that education creates lasting values that cannot be taken away.”
Esther Nandaiyo is a mother of three, proud shop-owner, and member of the Namnya Self-Help group. She had previously been wholly dependent on her husband to provide for her and their children, and sometimes he went months without receiving a salary. Being able to afford food was a struggle, and the stress put a strain on their marriage.

Hand in Hand’s training and support gave 30-year-old Esther courage and strength. After the entrepreneurship training, she decided to open a shop. With her own savings, a loan from the Self-Help group, and a loan from Hand in Hand Eastern Africa, she was able to start her business. The shop has done well from the start and it continues to grow. Today, Esther provides for the family.

Esther Nandaiyo, Kenya

“The training saved our marriage, and the entire family is very happy. I can buy clothes and shoes for our children and provide them with proper food. There is nothing more painful for a mother than having to send her children to bed hungry.”
Mediator Mabhunu and Talent Matandauro are potters and they have built up the Chisungo Investments company together with three relatives. With support from Hand in Hand, they were afforded the opportunity to broaden their knowledge and take their company to the next level. The young entrepreneurs took advantage of this valuable opportunity.

Training in entrepreneurship gave them not only new skills, but also the extra motivation they needed to feel ready to expand their business. They were granted a loan from Hand in Hand and they used the money to purchase raw materials for production and coal for firing the pottery.

“"We had previously attempted to borrow money from microfinance institutions but had been unsuccessful. That was frustrating, as the demand for our products was high, but we couldn’t meet the demand without access to capital,” says Talent Matandauro.

Chisungo Investments had previously produced around 40 pots per month, but, thanks to the increased capital, they could double production and significantly increase profits.
Basanti Devi was married at the age of 15 and she gave birth to six children. She and her husband live in the Indian village of Majavad. Her husband works in a nearby city, but his income is not sufficient to support the family.

Basanti wanted to contribute to the family income, which is why she joined Hand in Hand and participated in entrepreneurship training. She learned about both group dynamics and saving as well as book-keeping and business development. After the training, Basanti discussed various business ideas with Hand in Hand, which supported and guided her to the decision to open a fruit and vegetable stand. Basanti used the first week’s revenue to pay part of her daughter’s school fees.

Today, Basanti is equipped to live an independent life. She plans to pay for her daughter’s education and continue saving in order to have a buffer for unexpected expenses.
“Basanti used the first week’s revenue to pay part of her daughter’s school fees.”
WHAT HAS HAND IN HAND ACHIEVED THUS FAR?

Internal and external impact evaluations have found that incomes and standards of living have increased among the participants in the projects. They continue to save and engage in the Self-Help groups. Our target group bears witness to increased self-confidence and self-worth after participation in Hand in Hand’s training programmes.

Since its start, the Hand in Hand network has contributed to achieving the following results: (up to 31 December 2020)*

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<tr>
<td><strong>260,014</strong> New or enforced existing Self-Help groups</td>
<td><strong>3,118,040</strong> Persons have received training in entrepreneurship</td>
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<td>(23,063 during 2020)</td>
<td>(212,698 during 2020)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3,037,463</strong> Businesses enforced or started</td>
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<tr>
<td>(210,445 during 2020)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4,669,929</strong> Jobs improved or created</td>
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<td>(315,145 during 2020)</td>
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*Figures reported by each partner organisation. The figures include the results of projects completed or phased-out in Rwanda, South Africa, Lesotho, and Swaziland.

Conclusions, and looking forward

A year like no other – 2020 has been extreme in many ways. The pandemic and its effects have been extremely challenging for the entrepreneurs that have been trained by Hand in Hand and for our partner organisations. Many people have slid back into extreme poverty as their small businesses have collapsed. Considerable measures will be needed to assist them in rebuilding their businesses and creating stable livelihoods.

Evaluations show how important our operations are in helping vulnerable people to live decent lives. They have also demonstrated the importance of the informal sector for local economies. Impact evaluations and personal testimonials provide proof that investments in people’s own strength and abilities really do change lives. We also see that the activities are sustainable in the long term and that they build resilience to future crises.

Demand for jobs and opportunities to make a livelihood have increased dramatically in the wake of the pandemic. As such, demand for Hand in Hand’s programmes is also increasing. At the same time, environmental destruction and the effects of climate change are increasing. Women’s and girl’s rights are being undermined; human rights are being violated, and the democratic space is shrinking. Our activities need to include these perspectives.
The demand for Hand in Hand’s programmes is increasing in the wake of the pandemic.”