

Further Adjustments to the Programme of Work and Budget 2020-21

Hand in Hand Initiative - Key activities and resources

Background

1. The Hand-in-Hand Initiative (HIHI) is an FAO initiative aiming to accelerate agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development to eradicate poverty and end hunger and all forms of malnutrition, in full alignment with the SDGs. This will be achieved through a matchmaking approach which brings together beneficiary countries with donors, private sector organizations, international financial institutions, research institutions and civil society to mobilize means of implementation.
2. The Initiative responds to a number of limitations in international development assistance, in particular fragmentation of interventions, failure to capture synergies, competition among development partners and insufficient transparency, as well as weak data analysis capacity, suboptimal use of technical and policy skills and inadequate prioritization of projects and investments.
3. Rather than representing a new area of work for FAO, the HIHI constitutes a new approach to working and coordinating existing efforts within FAO, at country level or by partners, aiming to achieve productivity gains - using resources better to target efforts, improve results and achieve greater impact with the same investment.
4. In line with its aims, the initiative is guided by five principles:
 - Principle 1: Target the poorest***
 - Principle 2: Matchmaking***
 - Principle 3: Follow FAO mandate and SDG targets***
 - Principle 4: Provide a Framework which will:***
 - a) *Differentiate territories and strategies according to agro-economic potential*
 - b) *Bring together all dimensions of agrifood systems to understand the full impact of alternative interventions*
 - c) *Collect information on existing donor interventions*
 - d) *Develop a geospatial platform*
 - e) *Develop a prioritization metric*
 - Principle 5: Promote partnerships***
5. The Initiative prioritizes beneficiary countries where large numbers of people are at risk of being left behind, where hunger and extreme poverty is increasing. The list of priority countries evolves based on changing circumstances and needs and includes Least Developed Land-Locked Countries, Least Developed Small Island Developing States, countries in food crisis or highly populated countries, but also countries seeking support to manage impact of COVID-19 with the HIHI approach.

Core activities, governance and resources

6. A fundamental principle underpinning the Hand-in-Hand Initiative is that it is country-led and country-owned and that all key decisions, including participation, lie with national governments. FAO Representatives lead the coordination with the country supported by focal points at national, regional/subregional and headquarters levels. In addition to the country-focused activities,

fundamental enabling tools and technology are being developed to support the data collection and analysis.

7. The current core activities can be summarised as follows:

Big data lab

8. This is a new unit which uses artificial intelligence and access to remote sensing to collect data where little data is available, aiming to close gaps in data and to validate official data FAO uses and creating a mechanism for data quality control. The unit has developed three streams of work on the use of big data and data science: text-mining techniques; geospatial data science and big data solutions (web scraping, crowdsourcing, machine learning).

9. The unit is composed of five consultants under the supervision of a P5 staff, already in charge of big data operations at the Statistics Division. The team is fully funded by extrabudgetary resources, in line with purposes agreed with the relevant resource partners.

Hand-in-Hand Geospatial platform

10. A Geospatial platform has been developed that brings together geospatial data sourced from 20 different units within FAO, as well as from our partners and public data providers from across the UN, NGOs and space agencies. The Initiative so far has assembled over a million geospatial layers and thousands of statistic series with 4000 meta data records. The information was already being collected by FAO but in different “silos”, while the HIH Initiative efforts have brought together the staff and the data in a cooperative environment.

11. The core team handling the Geospatial platform comprises two staff (1 P4 and 1 P5) who were already working on this topic, but without the required coordination capacity until the HIHI was launched. The two staff are supported by 12 consultants funded by extrabudgetary resources. Furthermore, as this platform is not specific to HIHI countries, it is a corporate initiative benefitting the entire membership.

Hand-in-Hand country task forces

12. The work in the 15 countries where activities have started is supported by country level task forces, composed of: (a) country representative; (b) regional office representative; (c) headquarters representative; (d) Investment Centre representative; (e) SP1 representative; (f) SP3 representative; (g) SP4 representative, as well as representatives for different sectors, i.e. agriculture, fisheries, forestry, water, etc. depending on country priorities. Members of the task force carry out these duties within their existing overall terms of reference without need for any additional funding.

Investment plans for HIHI activities

13. In each of the 15 countries where HIHI has initiated activities, the task forces will identify investment priorities and, in collaboration with the Investment Centre develop investment plans. This work is funded by three sources:

- a) extrabudgetary resources, in line with agreements with the relevant resource partners;
- b) the World Bank partnership agreement with the Investment Centre whereby existing activities will now be directly coordinated and prioritized based on the HIH Initiative;
- c) TCPs requested by governments.

14. The implementation of the investment plans will be funded by resource partners and country resources.

Governance and coordination

15. The overall supervision and coordination of the Initiative is led by the Chief Economist, supported by the Director of the Investment Centre and two Senior Officers from the Emergencies and Resilience unit and from the office of the Chief Economist, working within their existing roles. The Further Adjustments to the Programme of Work and Budget proposes to support the coordination with additional non-staff resources for a total of USD 0.5 million.