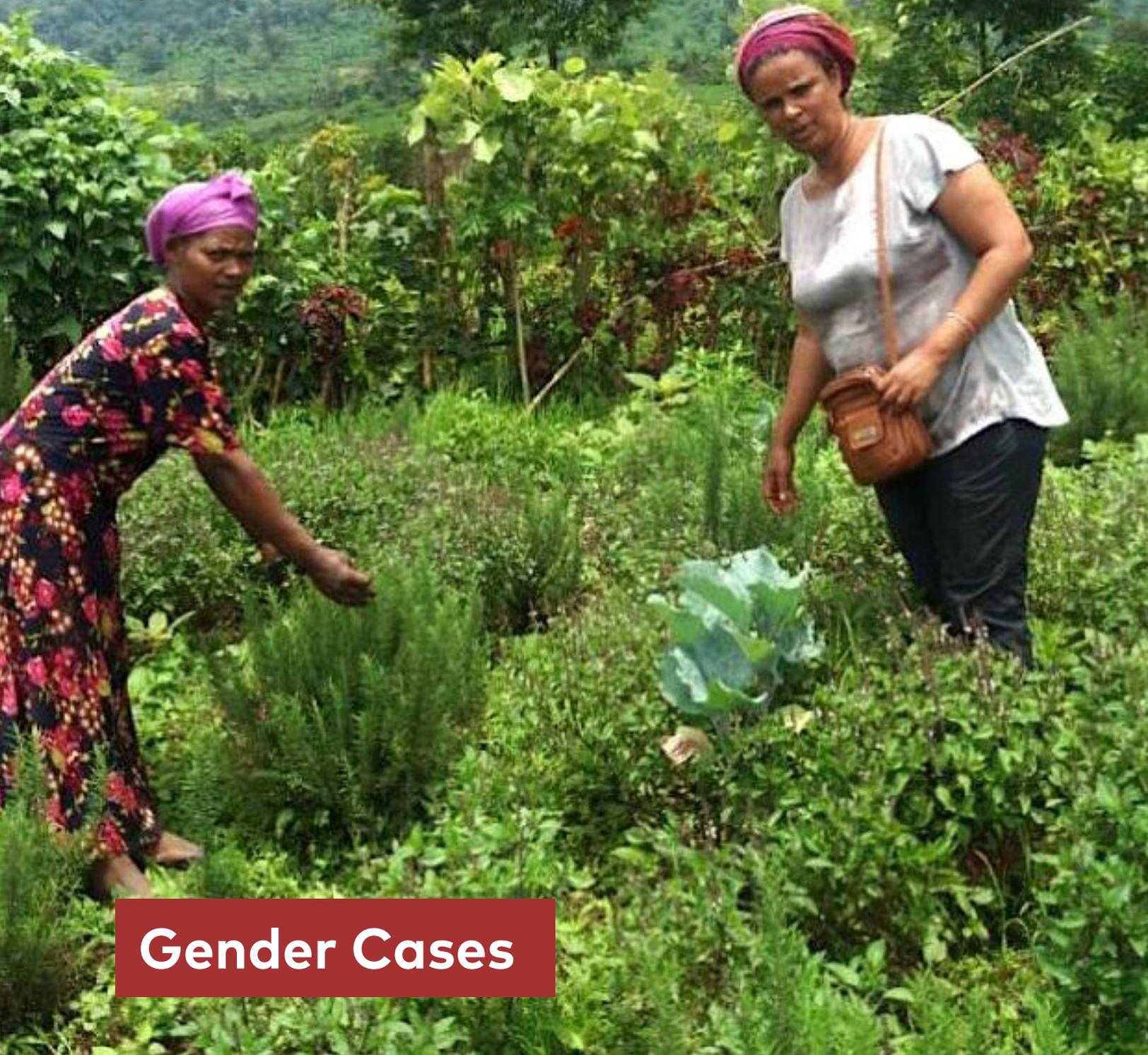


2SCALE

Acknowledgement of the unrecognized spice and herbs sector by empowering women



Gender Cases

2SCALE Consortium



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1. Introduction

The United Nations Environment Program and its partners estimated that improving women's access to agricultural inputs - such as land, knowledge, fertilizers, and improved seeds would help to close the gender gap in agricultural productivity up to 25%. Closing the gender gaps in agricultural productivity in Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania alone has the potential to increase these countries' gross domestic product by \$272 million and lift 437,000 people out of poverty (UNEP report, 2016).

Specifically, in Ethiopia, USAID (2020) report states that 80% of the population resides in rural areas and women provide most of the agricultural labor in these communities. It further explains that their contributions often go largely unrecognized and their fathers or husbands often restrict access to resources and community participation. 2SCALE intervenes to make significant difference which goes in line with making the above paragraph a reality and pertaining impact in changing the stated norm in Ethiopia. Specially, 2SCALE focuses on concrete actionable issues that business champions, farmers, and other stakeholders encounter, which constrain further deepening and/ or scaling of inclusive business models by addressing gender-related challenges to involve, empower and capacitate women.

Moreover, typical activities that partnerships implement along target value chain system are 2SCALE's approach on "women's economic empowerment" and job creation for the youth through the "youth inclusion" whereby aiming to unleash the economic potential of women and youth to contribute to poverty alleviation and food security.

Traditionally, spices and herbs were primarily produced for home consumption and medication purpose. With this partnership, women farmers will be attracted to produce spices and herbs mainly for the market. The production activities will be done exclusively by women at the backyard and this will contribute significantly to women economic empowerment.

Damascene essential oils processing PLC processes 15 types of spices and herbs namely long pepper, black pepper, green cardamon, thyme, rosemary, lemon verbena, rue, basil, black cardamom, lavender, ginger,

turmeric, pepper mint and koseret. Damascene processes and markets edible spices, high-quality essential oils and cosmetic products i.e. shampoo and creams (to be launched soon) for local market and aspires to supply to the international market as well.

Damascene used to have the processing facilities in 3 towns: Addis Ababa, Bishoftu, and Wondogenet. By now, the wondogenet processing plant has been transferred to Bonga town, kaaffa zone, where the entire gender case study documentation took place. The company's product has been retailed out in Addis Ababa and Beshoftu town.

The company mainly sources raw materials (spice and herb) in Kaffa zone in the Southern region of Ethiopia from 270 women farmers (at the start of the partnership in 2019) who are using their backyard lands. On average, each woman has 0.125-hectare backyard farming land. The company helped the women farmers to get organized in 5 cooperatives based on their different woreda/district locations to ensure win-win benefits, aiming to build its business by utilizing these resources in a sustainable way. The company distributed more than 100,000 seedlings of the 15 types of spices and herbs to the women cooperatives in 2019. Over 100 ha of land are covered with conservation agriculture integrating herb, spice, fruit trees while maintaining the wild forest trees.

Damascene and 2SCALE made a partnership to positively impact the current operations in the herb and spice sector in southern part of Ethiopia. From the supply base, the target is to increase women engagement from 270 farmers to 5,000 (out of which 1,500 will be female youth) over the coming 4 years. This will be achieved through mobilizing women into cooperatives over a wider range of geographical area and strengthening the capacity of these cooperatives to engage in a structured system. The Damascene partnership has aimed at empowering women, in-terms of managing the production and marketing activities at the backyard. Women are often excluded from the market opportunities and benefits of commercial crop production, limiting their ability to contribute to the family income. They have less education, less exposure to networks/information and lower self-confidence. Strategies such as distribution of quality seeds, capacity

building, producer group strengthening, better access to resources and services and market opportunities and linkages were implemented and mainly targeted women farmers.



Youth Woman farmer receiving Ginger seeds from the cooperative on credit terms, Detcha woreda,



Kaffa Zone, South West Ethiopia, growing Spices & Herbs Grower in her backyard

2. Gender based constraints in the sector

Less control over income

African women contribute 70% to agriculture work force. These contributions are considered as informal and invisible (UN, 2010). Women work alongside with their husband in the farm, but most of them do not have control over the income. As a result, they depend on their husband's decisions for household expenditures and any other day to day activities.

Even though women want to be involved in decision making on household expenditures and control over income, their point of view tends to be ignored. As the head of the family and the breadwinner is the husband, most of the decision making regarding the production process (what to grow, when and how), the marketing process and finally the generated income is in full control of the husband. As a result, most women have less interest to involve in the farm activity

Lack of extension programs

Spices and herbs were primarily produced for home consumption and medication purposes. Insufficient production created a big gap between demand and supply. Lack of knowledge on the production process and harvesting practices also contributed to lower quantity as well as quality of produce. In addition, provision of practical extension programs by government extension worker was among the significant challenges. Specially for women the support system was inaccessible because most of the extension program targeted male farmers and for crop production only .

Limited access to production resources

The existing laws adequately recognizes women's right to equality with respect to access to and control of property (including land) in Ethiopia. However, customary practices and stereotypes against women are still prevalent in the community, which hinders an effective implementation of the legal rights of women to possess and control land. It is suggested that legal awareness campaign and effective legal aid should be made available for women so they can fully enjoy their property rights in general and rural land use and administration. Similarly, most of the decision making regarding agricultural activities rely on men. This influences women's access to basic productive resources/agricultural inputs such as seed and access to finance as well as labor.

3. Best practices of the partnership

Traditionally the farmers produce spices in little amount and for household consumption purposes. Women farmers manage to get the needed amount of quality and quantity of planting materials (seedling and seeds) through Damascene. Through the partnership built with 2SCALE, the company became an off taker and critical input supplier. A consignment selling mechanism has been arranged to enable the farmers take the seeds through credit and Damascene deducts it when sourcing the spices/herbs from the women farmers. This intervention gradually strengthens spices and herbs producer's negotiation capacity and enabled them to convince their husbands to upscale their backyard cultivation land from 0.125 ha to one fourth of a hectare (0.25).

Access to Resources

"After I learnt about the business and started getting quality seeds of different herbs and spices, I needed to find my own harvesting land aside from the cooperative's farm where I serve as the chairwoman. I have discussed the matter with my husband. He immediately agreed with my proposal and gave me access to our backyard. The reason he did not deny my request is that he knew I will be able to help him a lot financially. Currently, I am planning to expand my farming activity and cultivate additional types of species in a larger quantity. So that I can generate more income for me and my family in the future." - Weynitu W/Senbet, Chairwoman of the Serto Meda Cooperative, Bonga.

With improved access to quality seeds and training in improved agricultural practices, the level of productivity increased. According to Weynitu, *"We get regular support from the government extension workers and by the coach who is hired by Damascene". They assist us constantly; because spices have different features and require special attention. For example, before getting the training, I harvested turmeric once a year with a low level of*

production, but after I got the training, I was able to get 6,000 birr from one harvest which is three times more than what I used to get."

Participation in the production and marketing decisions

Women in Damascene partnership are no different than most women who live in the agriculture-based economy. Although they are engaged in different farming activities, they do not get to decide on different production activities. But now things have started to change, thanks to a better knowledge of the production process.

"I spend almost 6-8 hours in a farm helping my husband but at the end of the day my efforts are invisible, and the household chores are waiting for me. He does not see me as his partner rather I am just there for help. He did everything on his own; without consulting me. Sometimes I did not even know what was on the land. Through time things start to change and it is me who make the decision on the land, which types of spice or herb to plant and when. I get technical support and trainings which helps me to understand the nature of spices/herbs and gave me control of the production process and the outcome," said Weynitu.

Access and control over income

The interventions in the Damascene partnership created an opportunity for women to strengthen women farmer's cooperatives and the relationship they have with Damascene. "Serto Meda" is a women-only cooperative which consist of 200 members who are engaged in backyard (garden) spice and herb production. Since the company pays women farmers directly, it allowed them to improve their living conditions and have a say in the generated income. Access to the income automatically empowered women. They were able to communicate with their partners and family members about the use of money,



Rahel (BC), visiting the woman turmeric farm under turmeric plantation , Bonga Zuria, Kaffa Zone, South West Ethiopia

learnt to manage the household budget and achieved financial independence.

Worke, who is a member of the cooperative and a mother of 8 children, explained how the whole family's economic status changed after she started to earn her own income. *"Having money in my hand started to change everything around the house. I can manage to go out to the market whenever I have something to sell or buy without my husband's permission. Before this, I only went to the market if he allowed me. Now I am the one who goes to the market to buy necessary items for the household and I even started to cover my children's expenses."*

Members of the cooperative started to generate a decent amount of income. They have noticed the changes around the house, and those positive changes boost their confidence. As the concept of economic empowerment is about the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2018), this scenario can highlight this in practice.

Division of Labor

As farmers, women are engaged in different activities on the family farm, such as ploughing, weeding, seedling, planting, harvesting, processing crops and selling production surplus at local markets, as well as tending small livestock. At rural household level, the gender division of labor commonly assigns women on multitude of socially accepted tasks which determine their time-use. Stereotyping along with limited awareness and unrecognized women's burden result in the power imbalances within the household. In this regard, the Damascene partnership had enabled women to gain self-esteem to express them when the need for assistance in different activities arises. According to Wenyitu, her husband actively contributes to her farm activities and provides her with the help she needs.

"He helps me when it comes to labor intensive activities such as preparing and measuring the land for cultivation. Occasionally, some types of spices need more rigorous work than others; especially turmeric, during harvesting becomes extremely labor intensive. Consequently, my husband helps me to harvest and transport the produce. If he did not support me, I would not deliver my product to the market on time. My success would not have been possible if my husband did not support me. Those who did not get

support from their husband or family stayed behind and got less income. I can say that my success story reflects my husband's significant involvement"

Another member of the women cooperatives, Berke, explained that not only her husband is involved but the whole family helps her in the household chores and at the farm. The communication within the family has gotten better now, thereby the whole family understands the burden of household chores on the farming activity. She says "Now they value my work because the whole family is benefiting from my income. This changes their attitudes about me and the work I do, that's also why they are more involved in the farm than before."

Sege Baje is one of the participants who has practiced traditional beekeeping for decades. He said that it is the younger generation's responsibility to modernize the beekeeping sector. He regrets all the unnecessary efforts they used to put and the risks they took. Hence, he plans to change the way he practices beekeeping for the sake of himself and his children.

Access to employment opportunity for women and youth

The business champion (which is also the Business support service in this case) wanted to undertake the seedling task at the processing level; so that the quality and quantity of produce is secured from the start. Hence, more than 50 employment opportunities

were created targeting mainly youth. Among which, fifteen were created for women and seven of them are currently actively working on the seedling farm on contract basis.

Terfe is a 25-year-old elementary school dropout. When her father died, she had no choice but to provide for her poor mother and her little siblings. *"As a child my dream was to get proper education and become a teacher. Unfortunately, my life turned upside down and I became the breadwinner for my family at a young age. For most of my life, I worked at a coffee farm. It was very labor intensive, and the wage was minimal. After long hours of hard work, I only got 200-250 ETB as a monthly salary. Things changed when I started working for Damascene at the seedling center. I have acquired skills from the different trainings I took and know-how on seedling farm and spice/herbs. The money is also good. I want a different and better path for my son! I always support him in life and provide him with good education."* – Terfe Koche, Employee of Damascene Seedling farm, Bonga.

In general, the employment opportunity not only brings change on incomes and economic empowerment but also capacitates women technically. Employees getting trainings and consistent assistance from the coach hired by Damascene, feel enlightened and get an opportunity to apply the learning through technical seedling farm activities. Both women who were interviewed, stated that the coaching



Discussion between the coach and Women cooperative members at times of COVID-19 restriction related to the supply of Spice seeds and plantation at Detcha Woreda, Kaffa Zone, SW Ethiopia



Coaching and mentoring of Rahel (BC) at Serto medan Women Spices & Herbs production and marketing coops, Wuhdu Kebele, Bonga zuria, Kaffa Zone, SW Ethiopia.

process was considerate of the needs of women and encourages them to improve whereby they were able to do their tasks efficiently.

Women farmers cooperatives

Serto –Medan cooperative is one of the women farmers' cooperative with 200 members engaged in backyard (garden) spices and herb cultivation. The cooperative has a well-organized structure, and the overall activity of the cooperative is coordinated by a chairwoman. Its members are strategically organized into support groups of one to ten (1 to 10) and one to five (1 to 5) depending on their locations. They meet every fifteen days to share valuable information on seedling, production quality, marketing, saving and other issues. *"We can now solve our problems on our own. This was possible because we unite and function as a team,"* said Bekelech.

The cooperative has a bylaw which helps it to manage and follow up on its members. Women who are assigned in administration/management positions, apart from regular membership tasks, provide additional assistance, guidance, and monitoring (quality assurance) services to the rest of the members.

Those who did a good job in the farm receive recognition such as being taken as a role model and giving speeches on meetings about how they were able to outshine; as a means of experience sharing to other members of the cooperatives. This also helps others to move forward with great motivation. For those who are not able to cope up or lag, additional assistance will be provided by the government extension workers and members themselves. The support, network and communication system among these women is strong. For instance, if a woman did not plant in time she will get support from the cooperative and if a member does not get support from her husband, the selected committee from the round table will put pressure to persuade him and ultimately get the help she needs.

Bekelech is one of the members and she serves as control and inspection operative. She thinks her role created an opportunity for women to make decisions, review the production system and monitor the quality of product. created an opportunity for women to make decisions, review the production system and monitor the quality of product.



Woyintu, one of the best performing Spices and Herbs growers and cooperative leaders, Bonga Zuria, Kaffa Zone, SW Ethiopia.

Results from 2SCALE interventions



The inclusive idea behind the Damascene partnership is that it will increase women engagement from 270 farmers to 5,000 (out of which 1,500 will be female youth) over the coming 4 years. Even if the partnership is on its initial stages of implementation, the intervention strategy to achieve gender equality and women economic empowerment looks promising.

The Damascene partnership is about engaging, empowering and upscaling women in-terms of managing the production and marketing activities. Women used to be excluded from production, land, income, and financial decisions. Hence, this partnership understands the women's constraints regarding less education, less exposure to networks/information and lower self-confidence. Strategies such as distribution of quality seeds, capacity building, producer group strengthening, better access to resources, services and market opportunities/linkages were successfully implemented.

The champion's dedication towards sustaining the inclusive business, the women farmers' ambition to achieve economic independence, the government assistance through extension service to assure gender equality, the community outlook and the support system were key success factors.

"I have always believed that my success is defined by other women's success." – Rahel Heruy (Owner of the Business Champion and the Business Support Services).

Damascene is an exemplary partnership whereby spice and herbs producers are benefiting in terms of access to resources, income, decision making on production process and their income, more balanced division of labor, employment opportunity (specially for youth) and the power of unity.

One remaining challenge raised by spice and herbs producers is that the quality of their produce is comprised mainly because of lack of modern (solar) drying mechanism. Serto-Medan cooperative office serves as a storage place but without a proper preservation mechanism, the produce gets affected during the cold season. When it rains, if the women bring the produce indoors before it has been sufficiently air dried, it will turn darker, resulting in lower price, or it might even be rejected. Hence, the intervention in this regard needs immediate action. This could be done through facilitating financial access and trainings on the technology applicability to the cooperatives or any other alternative which is suitable to and proposed by the business champion.



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