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THE CGIAR FOOD SYSTEMS ACCELERATOR  
COHORT ONE  
GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REPORT

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## CGIAR Initiative on Diversification in East and Southern Africa

The CGIAR Initiative on Diversification in East and Southern Africa aims to help smallholders transition to sustainably intensified, diversified, and de-risked agri-food systems based on maize in 12 ESA countries. Specifically, it seeks to enable 50,000 value chain actors, including farmers (at least 40% women, 40% youth), to adopt climate-smart maize-based intensification and diversification practices and one million to access digital agro-advisory services. Emphasizing the role of the private sector in driving such transformation, UU targets to support at least 30 start-ups and SMEs.

## Disclaimer

This publication has been prepared as an output of the CGIAR Initiative on Diversification in East and Southern Africa and has not been independently peer-reviewed. Responsibility for editing, proofreading, and layout, opinions expressed, and any possible errors lies with the authors and not the institutions involved.

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## 1.0 Background

The CGIAR Food Systems Accelerator (CFSA) was launched as part of the activities under the CGIAR Initiative on Diversification in East and South Africa (Ukama Ustawi), with the main objectives being, to strengthen food systems by scaling climate-smart food system innovations (through strategic support of commercially viable and inclusive climate-smart agribusinesses), develop a pipeline of inclusive climate-smart agribusinesses in East and Southern Africa, support inclusive climate-smart agribusinesses (through a 6-month program that provides investment readiness and business development, climate-smart agriculture (CSA) and impact measurement and management (IMM) technical assistance, coaching and mentoring) and facilitate access to finance through de-risking grants to scale CSA innovations and business models. In the inaugural CFSA cohort, 10 agribusinesses (Accelerator Partners) were supported from Kenya (4), Rwanda (2) Uganda (2), and Zambia (2).

The CFSA program combined investment readiness with tailored science-based technical assistance to provide agribusiness companies with the necessary tools and knowledge to become more commercially viable and sustainable. This approach promotes sustainable farming practices that can enhance food production while mitigating the impact of climate change. The program prioritizes agribusinesses scaling innovations designed with a user-centric design approach for smallholder farmers and that have a strong potential for commercial sustainability focusing on two business development stages: early-stage companies and growth-stage companies.

As part of the program the Accelerator Partners received Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Technical assistance. The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) technical assistance implementation process was led by Dr. Karen Nortje in collaboration with The Rallying Cry team. Dr. Karen Nortje is a senior researcher and social inclusion subject matter expert and the WP5 lead, while The Rallying Cry is an ecosystem initiative (<https://therallyingcry.org/>) working to shift private sector capital at the nexus of gender, climate and agribusiness. The team sought to support the Accelerator Partners by equipping them to strengthen the capacity and agency of men, women and youth within their agribusiness value chain(s). To achieve this, the team developed individual *Gender Equality and Social Inclusion* (GESI) action plans for each Accelerator Partner to help address the barriers to inclusivity.

## 2.0 GESI Technical Assistance Overview

Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) is a key strategic factor that determines the economic, social, and environmental (climate) resilience and sustainability of any business, especially Agribusinesses in Africa<sup>1</sup>. This element of the technical assistance focused on highlighting why GESI should matter to businesses while illustrating why women and youth require additional support to participate fully in agricultural value chains. A business case was made by outlining what strategic benefits the Accelerator partners would enjoy by being more inclusive. An individual GESI Action Plan was developed for each Partner.

### 2.1 Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) - Why it matters for businesses

A GESI Action Plan is a powerful mainstreaming tool that will help the Accelerator Partners derive the benefits and impact of being GESI smart; by guiding them and their teams in the development and adaptation of inclusive strategies and practices. Additionally, the plan will help monitor the implementation progress of the same. Having an effective plan allows the business to attain better performance, manage risk, retain good talent, implement business solutions more effectively and efficiently, and engage with aligned gender lens investors effectively (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 | Showing how diverse teams create breakthrough and make better decisions



### 2.2 GESI Action Plan Development Approach

The following key steps were followed in the development of the GESI Action plan. They included baseline data collection, analysis, and development of gender goals and activities.

#### i) Baseline Data Collection

The process began with the collection of gender and age-disaggregated baseline data through an online questionnaire guided by the 2X Criteria. Data was collected on entrepreneurship (founding and ownership), leadership (senior management and board positions), employment (internal and external workforce and partners), and consumption (products, services, and communication).

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Wp417.pdf>

## ii) Data Analysis

The baseline data was analyzed to understand and assess the current gender equality and social inclusion profile of the business. The identified gaps and opportunities for higher inclusion formed the basis of the plan.

## iii) Development of GESI goals and targets

Following the GESI analysis and assessment, and the identification of inclusion gaps and opportunities, a list of goals and activities was developed and summarized into a GESI action plan presented as a schedule/table (Section 2.3 in each plan). The targets were developed for the major themes/gender outputs that guided the collection of the baseline data as summarized above.

The GESI outputs and target development were guided by three main frameworks: the 2X Global Criteria, the CGIAR GESI framework and the gender responsive business model canvas.

To ensure the development of GESI plans reflects contemporary business practices related to gender and social inclusion, the theoretical foundation for the Plan was based on three frameworks selected for their ease of application in linking gender and social inclusion:

I. The **CGIAR GESI Framework**<sup>2</sup> is based on recent research in East and South Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). It helps to contextualize the gender and social inclusion action plan in two ways. First, it presents a summary of the current sectoral and regional gender gaps, pointing users to where their business should direct and focus its gender and inclusion efforts. Second, it provides suggestions on what can be done by businesses to be more inclusive.

II. The gender-responsive **Business Model Canvas**<sup>3</sup> which was developed under the investor readiness technical assistance stream by the IFDC-2SCALE team, is an effective and easy tool to formulate practical gender goals which are in-built into nine strategy components. It helps integrate business and gender strategies.

III. The **2X Criteria**<sup>4</sup> are emerging as leading international best practices for investors (see Figure 1). They are a widely accepted framework for gender lens investing and provide an increasingly industry-accepted approach for investor engagement.

Each GESI Action Plan was developed based on the data collected from the 10 Accelerator Partners. The 2X criteria was used as a guide to capture baseline/existing business composition and practices reflecting gender and social inclusion. Analysis of the baseline data allowed us to create a business gender profile with a summary of identified gaps and opportunities for enterprises' inclusive policies and processes. The CGIAR GESI framework was referenced to provide an overview of the challenges that limit the full participation of women and youth in agricultural value chains. The gender sensitive business canvas model was used to help Accelerator Partners develop inclusive GESI practices across all elements of their business models.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/130852>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.2scale.org/upload/846294\\_2SCALE\\_BoP-Marketing-and.pdf](https://www.2scale.org/upload/846294_2SCALE_BoP-Marketing-and.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.2xchallenge.org/criteria>

### 3.0 Individual Accelerator Partner Summaries

In the following sections we are presenting in brief ten enterprises with their GESI profiles:

#### I. Stable Foods Ltd.

Stable Foods Ltd. (<https://www.stable-foods.com/>) is growing an end-to-end smallholder food production platform. Their key intervention is ultra-low-cost "irrigation-as-a-service" subscription for smallholder farmers. Leveraging shared capex through networked irrigation solutions, Stable Foods has proven economies of scale can drive down the cost per unit for farmers and make irrigation work for even tiny plots of land at a price point that is very affordable to any smallholder. In addition, they provide input, training and produce offtake.

#### Company GESI profile and summary of activities

The analysis of the company's GESI baseline data showed that the company already has gender resources including policies, a standing Gender Action Plan (from which info was pulled out and updated into the updated plan). Women are fairly well represented in the small-holder farmers (37.5 %) as well as in the workforce (33%) and senior management (40%). In terms of youth, 83% of the workforce is made up of youth. A majority of customers and beneficiaries are women.

A summary profile is given below:

2X Criteria	2X Threshold	Current Company Position
<b>Entrepreneurship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>51% business ownership</li> <li>OR</li> <li>The business is founded by a woman</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The company is neither founded by a woman or youth</li> <li>The company is 30% woman owned</li> <li>The company has no youth ownership</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25% of senior management are women</li> <li>OR</li> <li>30% of the board are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The company is not women led</li> <li>40% of senior management are women</li> <li>No youth representation in senior management</li> <li>No GESI sensitization training has been done for senior management</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b> <i>Internal</i>	<p><b>Internal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40% of the workforce are women</li> <li>OR</li> <li>One quality indicator beyond compliance (having a policy addressing women inequality beyond those required for compliance in place - with evidence of</li> <li>Implementation/commitment. e.g. wage equality, childcare,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>33% of workforce is made up of women</li> <li>About 83% of the workforce is made up of youth</li> <li>No gender sensitization training has been carried out for all employees</li> <li>The company has an anti-discriminatory HR policy in place</li> <li>The company has not designated facilities to cater to women's roles e.g. lactation rooms, separate changing rooms etc</li> </ul>

<p><b>External</b></p>	<p>discrimination etc</p> <p><b>External</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 40% of the workforce (suppliers) are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 37.5 % of smallholder farmers are women</li> <li>● Smallholder farmer recruitment has not been recruited with a focus on women or youth</li> <li>● Men, as rural household heads have not been included in gender-equity solutioning</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consumption</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The product addresses women’s specific needs</li> <li>● Addresses a problem that disproportionately affects women</li> <li>● Majority of customers are women</li> <li>● Majority of beneficiaries are women</li> </ul>	<p><b>Product</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The main product is healthy, affordable accessible food and women are key purchasers/decision makers</li> </ul> <p><b>Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promotional channels that are likely to reach more women or youth have not been explored</li> <li>● Products are not marketed in a way that specifically targets women or youth</li> </ul>

### Intervention Summary

The activities designed for the Accelerator Partner were geared towards making them more inclusive to youth and more responsive to their customers who are mainly women. For example, the company needs to organize gender mainstreaming training for management and the rest of the employees as well as adjust the facilities to cater to the unique needs of women. Finally, given the nature of the product- healthy and affordable food, marketing communication needs to be more targeted towards women.

## II. Batian Nuts Ltd

Batian Nuts Ltd (BNL) is an agro-processing company incorporated in 2017 in Kenya as a private limited liability company (<https://batiannuts.co.ke/>). BNL was started so that it could capture and fill in a gap in the offtaking of macadamia nuts produced by smallholder farms in Tharaka Nithi and Meru Counties, and also seize other opportunities that existed in the Kenyan edible nuts sub-sector. The Business is now six years old and has already turned a profit.

### Company GESI Profile and summary of activities

The analysis of the company’s GESI baseline data showed that although the company is not founded or significantly owned by women or youth, they are fairly well represented in the small-holder farmers as well as in the workforce and senior management. The company has separate (gender segregated) changing rooms and is planning to construct a lactating room.



A summary profile is given below:

2X Criteria	2X Threshold	Current Company Position
<b>Entrepreneurship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 51% business ownership</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The business is founded by a woman</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The company is not founded by women or youth</li> <li>• 2% of the company is owned by women</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25% of senior management are women</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30% of the board are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40% of senior management are women</li> <li>• 80% of senior management are youth</li> <li>• The company has a 7-member board with no board member being a woman or youth</li> <li>• No GESI sensitization training has been done for senior management</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b>  <i>Internal</i>	<p><b>Internal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40% of the workforce are women</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One quality indicator beyond compliance (having a policy addressing women inequality beyond those required for compliance in place - with evidence of implementation/commitment. e.g. wage equality, childcare, discrimination etc).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately 68% of the company's employees are women</li> <li>• Approximately 84% of employees are youth</li> <li>• No gender sensitization training has been carried out for employees</li> <li>• The company has zero tolerance sexual harassment and equal employment opportunity policies</li> <li>• The company has provided women with the required facilities to address their needs- different changing rooms with plans to construct a lactating mothers nursery</li> </ul>
<i>External</i>	<p><b>External</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40% of the workforce(suppliers) are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75% of smallholder farmers are women (however, recruitment is not done with a focus on women)</li> <li>• Men (household heads) have not been effectively involved as part of the gender equity solutioning</li> </ul>
<b>Consumption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The product addresses women's specific needs</li> <li>• Addresses a problem that disproportionately affects women</li> <li>• Majority of customers are women</li> <li>• Majority of beneficiaries are women</li> </ul>	<p><b>Product</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Products do not disproportionately benefit women</li> </ul> <p><b>Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotional channels which are more likely to reach women customers have not been established</li> </ul>

## Intervention Summary

The company needs to enhance women participation and organize gender mainstreaming training for management and the rest of the employees. Finally, communication for opportunities as well as the products needs to be more targeted towards women. The activities designed for the Accelerator Partner were geared towards achieving the above.

### III.The Insectary Kenya

Insectary Kenya is a limited company established by two entrepreneurs who saw an opportunity to return food waste to the food chain as protein from the amazing black soldier fly.

#### Company GESI Profile and summary of activities

The analysis of the company's GESI baseline data showed that the company is woman-founded, owned (100%) with 50% of ownership being by youth. 100% of the senior management positions are held by women. The company has a board, 33% of which are women, and 33% are youth. 67% of employees are women and almost 90% are youth.

A summary profile is given below:

2X Criteria	2X Threshold	Current Company Position
<b>Entrepreneurship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 51% business ownership</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The business is founded by a woman</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Woman Owned (100%)</li> <li>• Woman Founded (Yes)</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25% of senior management are women</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30% of the board are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% of senior management are women</li> <li>• 33% of board is women</li> <li>• No gender sensitization training has been done for senior management</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b>	<p><b>Internal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40% of the workforce are women</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One quality indicator beyond compliance (having a policy addressing women inequality beyond those required for compliance in place - with evidence of implementation/commitment. e.g. wage equality, childcare, discrimination etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 67% of employees are women</li> <li>• 90% of employees are youth</li> <li>• No gender sensitization training has been done for all employees</li> <li>• The company has provided some gender sensitive facilities to cater to women's needs (changing rooms)</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>		<p><b>External</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40% of the workforce(suppliers) are women</li> </ul>

<b>Consumption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The product addresses women’s specific needs</li> <li>• Addresses a problem that disproportionately affects women</li> <li>• Majority of customers are women</li> <li>• Majority of beneficiaries are women</li> </ul>	<b>Product</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The product is currently not positioned as disproportionately benefiting women or youth. (This presents an opportunity)</li> </ul>
		<b>Communication</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The company has established effective means of communication to reach women is word of mouth</li> <li>• Products are not marketed to specifically target women or youth</li> </ul>

### Intervention Summary

Smallholder farmer gender and age-segregated data is not yet available and securing the same formed part of the objectives of the GESI action plan. Although the company has made some provisions e.g. providing gender-sensitive changing rooms, they need to design policies and engage women and youth within their value chain to design more inclusive strategies for both groups. The company has also established that word of mouth works best for its target market. The GESI Action plan focus was on achieving more inclusion in the ways described above.

### IV.Shamba Records

Shamba Records leverages emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence to digitize the agriculture sector from farm to fork. With their farm management tool, they track farmers' yields and payments. Their tool enables them to unlock new farmer lending opportunities, extension services automation, disease outbreak mapping, market linkages, and crop/livestock insurance for farmers.

### Company GESI Profile and summary of activities

The analysis of the company’s GESI baseline data showed that the company is founded by youth and has both women and youth represented in their employees, farmers and board. 100% of senior management employees are women and youth and the product provided by the company disproportionately benefits women because it is a transparent platform where women gain access to services that they would traditionally not have access to including markets, direct payments and credit.

A summary profile is given below::

2X Criteria	2X Threshold	Current Company Position
<b>Entrepreneurship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 51% business ownership</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The business is founded by a woman</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The company is not founded by a woman but is founded by a youth and is women led</li> <li>• 30% of the company is woman-owned</li> <li>• 70% of the company is youth-owned</li> </ul>

<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25% of senior management are women</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30% of the board are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 % of the employees are senior management and are all (100%) women and youth</li> <li>• The company has a 5-member board with 2 (40%) of the directors being women and 3(60%) being youth</li> <li>• No GESI sensitization training has been done for senior management</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b>  <i>Internal</i>	<i>Internal</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40% of the workforce are women</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One quality indicator beyond compliance (having a policy addressing women inequality beyond those required for compliance in place - with evidence of implementation/commitment. e.g. wage equality, childcare, discrimination etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 37.5% of the employees are women</li> <li>• 100% of the employees are youth</li> <li>• The company is yet to carry out GESI sensitization training all employees</li> <li>• The company has a generic HR policy touching on general employee code of conduct (not GESI focused)</li> <li>• The company has no designated facilities for women employees e.g. a lactation room</li> </ul>
<i>External</i>	<i>External</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40% of the workforce(suppliers) are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The company works with 16,000 smallholder farmers with 60% of them being women and 65% of them being youth</li> <li>• The company carries out training with a recruitment focus on women regularly</li> <li>• The company engages and involves men as key stakeholders while finding solutions to providing more opportunities for women and youth</li> </ul>
<b>Consumption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The product addresses women’s specific needs</li> <li>• Addresses a problem that disproportionately affects women</li> <li>• Majority of customers are women</li> <li>• Majority of beneficiaries are women</li> </ul>	<b>Product</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The product provided by the company disproportionately benefits women because it is a transparent platform where women gain access to services that they would traditionally not have access to including markets, direct payments and credit</li> </ul> <b>Communication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The company has not established which communication channels work best for women and youth and consequently also do not market their product in a way that targets women and youth</li> </ul>

## Intervention Summary

The GESI action plan activities focused on the need to organize gender mainstreaming training for management and the rest of the employees as well as adjust the facilities to cater to the unique needs of women. Other activities included reaching more women; given the nature of the product and its great potential to increase access to equal opportunities to women and youth, they need to establish the most effective communication channels and carry out their marketing in a more targeted manner.

## V.The Aggregator Trust Rwanda

Aggregator Trust is a women-led business initiative aimed at promoting affordable and nutritious food for low-income households in Rwanda, who face challenges in purchasing the expensive food necessary for a healthy life. In collaboration with its partners, Aggregator Trust is working to enhance the resilience of small-scale farmers that the company sources from by providing access to relevant research and information for sustainable farming practices.

### Company GESI Profile and summary of activities

The analysis of the company's GESI baseline data showed that the company is woman-founded, owned (100%), and led (50% of senior management are women; 25% are youth). The company has a board of 5 members 40% of whom are women, and 40% are youth. 70% of employees are women and 54% are youth, while 70% of their smallholder farmers are women, and 54% - youth.

A summary profile is given below:

2X Criteria	2X Threshold	Current Company Position
<b>Entrepreneurship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>51% business ownership</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The business is founded by a woman</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Woman Owned (100%)</li> <li>Woman Founded</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25% of senior management are women</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30% of the board are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50% of senior management are women</li> <li>40% of board is women</li> <li>No gender sensitization training has been done for senior management</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b> <i>Internal</i>	<p><i>Internal</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40% of the workforce are women</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One quality indicator beyond compliance (having a policy addressing women inequality beyond those required for compliance in place - with evidence of implementation/ commitment. e.g. wage equality, childcare, discrimination etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>74% of employees are women</li> <li>54% of employees are youth</li> <li>No gender sensitization training has been done for all employees</li> <li>The company has not provided gender sensitive facilities to cater to women's needs</li> </ul>

<p><b>External</b></p>	<p><b>External</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40% of the workforce(suppliers) are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approx. 70% of smallholder farmers are women</li> <li>• Approx. 40% of smallholder farmers are youth</li> <li>• Smallholder farmer recruitment activities have not been carried out with a focus on women farmers</li> <li>• The company’s trainings and access to finance products are gender neutral but the finance product is especially accessible to women as it only requires their trading history to qualify for the loans (as compared to mainstream and traditional sources that require collateral, which is usually land and other assets that women have limited access to)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consumption</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The product addresses women’s specific needs</li> <li>• Addresses a problem that disproportionately affects women</li> <li>• Majority of customers are women</li> <li>• Majority of beneficiaries are women</li> </ul>	<p><b>Product</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Rwanda; in the areas in which the company operates, participation in bean agriculture is beneficial for women’s economic status and an opportunity to provide nutrient-rich food for their families.</li> </ul> <p><b>Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The company has established effective means of communication to reach women (community meetings, radio campaigns)</li> <li>• Products are not marketed to specifically target women</li> </ul>

### Intervention Summary

The GESI action plan was focused on helping the company to maintain these standards while making some adjustments to be more inclusive by providing gender needs-sensitive facilities (e.g. changing and lactation rooms), conducting gender sensitization training, implementing smallholder farmer recruitment activities targeting women and youth, and marketing strategies focusing specifically on women.

### VI. Afri-Farmers Market

Afri-Farmer Market is a leading homegrown food grocery chain social enterprise in Rwanda that is providing a stable market to local farmers. They are leveraging technology to support local and smallholder farmers to access stable markets for their agricultural produce through their e-commerce platform. And, they help farmers increase their farm productivity through best agricultural practices and access to farm inputs.

## Company GESI Profile and summary of activities

Although the company is not founded or owned by women, it is founded and 100% owned by youth. The company has a board of 3 with 1(33%) being a woman and none being a youth. 47% of employees are women while 60% of senior managers are women. GESI training has been carried out for senior management but not for all employees. However, there is an HR policy in place to increase women's participation internally as employees. Finally, 60% of their smallholder farmers are women; while 80% of smallholder farmers are youth. Farmer recruitment activities are targeted at women and youth with the company being keen to onboard teen mothers to offer them training, access to inputs, the market for their produce, and financial literacy training.

A summary profile is given below:

2X Criteria	2X Threshold	Current Company Position
<b>Entrepreneurship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>51% business ownership</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The business is founded by a woman</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The company is not founded by women</li> <li>0% of the company is owned by women</li> <li>100% of the company is youth owned.</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25% of senior management are women</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30% of the board are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>60% of senior management are women</li> <li>100% of senior management are youth</li> <li>The company has a 3-member board with one board member being a woman (33%) and none being a youth</li> <li>GESI sensitization training has been done for senior management</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b>	<p><b>Internal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40% of the workforce are women</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One quality indicator beyond compliance (having a policy addressing women inequality beyond those required for compliance in place - with evidence of implementation/ commitment. e.g. wage equality, childcare, discrimination etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximately 47% of the company's employees are women</li> <li>Approximately 93% of employees are youth</li> <li>No gender sensitization training has been carried out for employees</li> <li>The company has a HR policy to increase women's participation internally</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<p><b>External</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40% of the workforce(suppliers) are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>60% of smallholder farmers are women and recruitment is done with a focus on women especially teen mothers</li> <li>Men (household heads) have been effectively involved as part of the gender equality solutioning and have been trained on the same</li> </ul>

<b>Consumption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The product addresses women’s specific needs</li> <li>• Addresses a problem that disproportionately affects women</li> <li>• Majority of customers are women</li> <li>• Majority of beneficiaries are women</li> </ul>	<b>Product</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Product sourcing disproportionately benefits women (The company buys fresh produce from farmers who are majority women and also the majority of customers women too)</li> </ul>
		<b>Communication</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotional channels which are more likely to reach women customers have not been established</li> </ul>

### Intervention Summary

The GESI action plan was focused on helping the company to maintain these standards while making some adjustments to be more inclusive e.g. establishing which promotional channels are more likely to reach women and youth as well as including youth and women in their inclusion solutioning process.

## VII. Eastern Agricultural Development Company Limited (EADC)

Eastern Agricultural Development Company Ltd (EADC)’s core business is producing, processing, and trading super-rich and bio-fortified iron-rich beans and orange fleshed sweet potatoes sourced from over 3,000 small-holder farmers aiming at solving Uganda’s malnutrition deficiencies of Vitamin A, Iron and Zinc.

### Company GESI Profile and summary of activities

The company is woman-founded, owned (80%) and led (67% of senior management are women). 67% of employees are youth and the company makes deliberate efforts to support women and youth since inception through their farmer meetings and training. The company’s product pre-cooked beans disproportionately benefits women by saving them time which they can dedicate to other income generating activities. Finally, the company is currently constructing their new premises and has made provisions for gender segregated facilities including changing and lactation rooms.

A summary profile is given below:

2X Criteria	2X Threshold	Current Company Position
<b>Entrepreneurship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 51% business ownership</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The business is founded by a woman</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Woman Owned (80%)</li> <li>• Woman Founded (Yes)</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25% of senior management are women</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30% of the board are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 67% of senior management are women</li> <li>• 40% of board is women and none are youth</li> <li>• No gender sensitization training has been done for senior management</li> </ul>



<p><b>Employment</b></p> <p><i>Internal</i></p>	<p><b>Internal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40% of the workforce are women</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One quality indicator beyond compliance (having a policy addressing women inequality beyond those required for compliance in place - with evidence of implementation/commitment. e.g. wage equality, childcare, discrimination etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>33% of employees are women</li> <li>67% of employees are youth</li> <li>GESI sensitization training has been previously conducted for employees</li> <li>The company has a HR a general manual</li> <li>The company has not provided gender sensitive facilities including changing and lactation rooms but these will be included in the new factory which is under construction</li> </ul>
<p><i>External</i></p>	<p><b>External</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40% of the workforce(suppliers) are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The company has approx. 3000 smallholder farmers but numbers of women and youth are to be confirmed.</li> <li>Smallholder farmer recruitment activities have been carried out with a focus on women and youth farmers</li> <li>The company's trainings have included both men and women (although with a focus on women)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consumption</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The product addresses women's specific needs</li> <li>Addresses a problem that disproportionately affects women</li> <li>Majority of customers are women</li> <li>Majority of beneficiaries are women</li> </ul>	<p><b>Product</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The pre-cooked beans product disproportionately benefits women because it saves them time which can be dedicated to other income generating activities.</li> <li>The main customers for the product are also women.</li> </ul> <p><b>Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The company has not established the most effective means of communication for women and youth across their database.</li> <li>Marketing and all communications are gender neutral with no effort to target women or youth specifically</li> </ul>

## Intervention Summary

The data analysis established that only 33% of employees are women which is below the recommended threshold. The plan focused on activities that would help the company close these gaps e.g. carrying out skills audits, enhancing women’s and youth skills through training and establishing which promotional channels are more likely to reach women and youth as well as including youth and women in their inclusion solutioning process.

## VIII. Yellow Star Food Processors (U)

Yellow Star is an Agro-based organic food processing company processing cereals and other grains into precooked composite flour for porridge and food for healthy nutrition whilst saving preparation time. Through value addition and last-mile distribution of nutritious foods, Yellow Star champions access to nutritious products for children, expectant women, the elderly, and people living with HIV/AIDS. Currently, Yellow Star buys 60% of farm produce from small and micro enterprises and 40% from women-led farmer groups. Going forward, Yellow Star intends to source produce from women-led groups in order for it to become more inclusive and intentionally empower and enhance gains for women as well as equip them with climate smart farming practices for sustainable production.

### Company GESI Profile and summary of activities

The company is woman-founded, owned (50%) and partly led (50% of senior management are women; 25% - youth). The company has established a board of directors 80% of whom are women and 40% - youth. 52% of employees are women and 32% - youth, while 70% of their smallholder farmers are women and 30% - youth. Additionally, the company makes deliberate efforts to support women to fully participate in their value chain activities by targeting women in recruitment strategies and providing business-focused training. The company also conducted training for men to explain the importance of gender equality and emphasizing the benefit of men and women working together.

A summary profile is given below:

2X Criteria	2X Threshold	Current Company Position
<b>Entrepreneurship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>51% business ownership</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The business is founded by a woman</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Woman Owned (50%)</li> <li>Youth Owned (30%)</li> <li>Woman Founded (Yes)</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25% of senior management are women</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30% of the board are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50% of senior management are women</li> <li>80% of board is women</li> <li>Gender mainstreaming training was organized for senior management (2022)</li> </ul>

<p><b>Employment</b></p> <p><i>Internal</i></p>	<p><b>Internal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40% of the workforce are women</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One quality indicator beyond compliance (having a policy addressing women inequality beyond those required for compliance in place - with evidence of implementation/ commitment. e.g. wage equality, childcare, discrimination etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 52% of employees are women</li> <li>• 32% of employees are youth</li> <li>• Gender sensitization training had been conducted for employees (2022)</li> <li>• The company has a general work policy in place and also provided gender segregated facilities to cater to the needs of women</li> <li>• The company has not provided gender sensitive facilities including changing and lactation rooms</li> </ul>
<p><i>External</i></p>	<p><b>External</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40% of the workforce(suppliers) are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approx. 70% of smallholder farmers are women</li> <li>• Approx. 30% of smallholder farmers are youth</li> <li>• Smallholder farmer recruitment activities were carried out from 2018 to 2021</li> <li>• The company's training engages men as well as women to explain the importance of gender equality and the benefits of working together to achieve greater outcomes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consumption</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The product addresses women's specific needs</li> <li>• Addresses a problem that disproportionately affects women</li> <li>• Majority of customers are women</li> <li>• Majority of beneficiaries are women</li> </ul>	<p><b>Product</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women are the main users of the company's products. The benefits to women include access to safe, healthy products which are easy to prepare, therefore saving time and energy</li> </ul> <p><b>Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The company does not have information available on which channels are most effective for reaching women</li> <li>• Products are marketed to target women</li> </ul>

### Intervention Summary

The company scored highly across all criteria and needs to maintain these standards while making some adjustments to be more inclusive such as identifying the most effective channels of communication to reach women. The activities suggested in the GESI Action plan were focused on this.

### IX. Farm Depot

Farm Depot supplies the best agricultural products and services to ensure Zambia's farmers are profitable. The company is in the process of leveraging its database of 35,000 farmers to provide a micro-lending product to farmers with a partner financial institution.

## Company GESI Profile and summary of activities

The company is woman-founded, owned (50%) and led (75% of senior management are women). 63% of employees are youth while 27% of their smallholder farmers are youth and additionally, the company makes deliberate efforts to support women and youth to fully participate in their value chain activities by providing access to loans.

A summary profile is given below:

2X Criteria	2X Threshold	Current Company Position
<b>Entrepreneurship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>51% business ownership</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The business is founded by a woman</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Woman Owned (50%)</li> <li>Woman Founded (Yes)</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25% of senior management are women</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30% of the board are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>75% of senior management are women</li> <li>50% of board is women</li> <li>No gender sensitization training has been done for senior management</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b>	<p><b>Internal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40% of the workforce are women</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One quality indicator beyond compliance (having a policy addressing women inequality beyond those required for compliance in place - with evidence of implementation/ commitment. e.g. wage equality, childcare, discrimination etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50% of employees are women</li> <li>63% of employees are youth</li> <li>Recent gender sensitization training had been conducted for employees (2023)</li> <li>The company has an equal opportunity policy for women, disabled, and youth recognizing them as marginalized groups with priority being given to them. Equal opportunity is offered for employment as well as during promotions</li> <li>The company has not provided gender-sensitive facilities including changing and lactation rooms</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<p><b>External</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40% of the workforce(suppliers) are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approx. 55% of smallholder farmers are women</li> <li>Approx. 27% of smallholder farmers are youth</li> <li>Smallholder farmer recruitment activities have been carried out with a focus on women farmers (throughout the year Farm Depot conducts training on poultry production and financial literacy which women are actively encouraged to join)</li> <li>The company's training and access to finance products are gender neutral but the finance product is especially accessible to women as it only requires their trading history to qualify for the loans (as compared to mainstream and traditional sources that require collateral, which</li> </ul>

		is usually land and other assets that women have limited access to)
<b>Consumption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The product addresses women’s specific needs</li> <li>• Addresses a problem that disproportionately affects women</li> <li>• Majority of customers are women</li> <li>• Majority of beneficiaries are women</li> </ul>	<b>Product</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Zambia; in the areas in which the company operates, poultry farming is traditionally done by women as it is a home industry which women can do whilst attending to other domestic commitments</li> <li>• Loan products can disproportionately benefit women by availing resources</li> </ul>
		<b>Communication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The company has established from experience that SMS is the most effective means of communication for women across their database. Radio and social media are also effective, however, important to note is that smartphone penetration is limited in their customer demographic</li> <li>• Marketing and all communications are gender-neutral unless there is a specific product designed to target women</li> </ul>

### Intervention Summary

Although the company scored highly on the assessment generally, there is a need to maintain these standards while making some adjustments to be more inclusive including providing gender needs sensitive facilities (e.g. changing and lactation rooms) and regular gender sensitization training especially for senior managers. The GESI Action Plan focused on the same.

### X. Forest Africa Zambia

Forest Africa Zambia Limited is a Zambian company incorporated in November 2017. The factory is based in Chilanga Mapepe area. The company specializes in processing of organic indigenous wild fruit juices that include Mabuyu (Baobab) and Ngai (False Medlar) juices. Based on the principles of extended producer responsibility and circular economy, Forest Africa (Z) Limited operates a zero-waste philosophy where all parts of the baobab fruit are used efficiently. The fruit powder is processed into Juice, seeds are pressed into an oil used for skin and hair care while the shells are converted into eco-friendly charcoal briquettes that are used as an energy source at our factory, and funicles (fibers) into red tea which is rich in antioxidants.

#### Company GESI Profile and summary of activities

The company is woman-founded, owned (50%) and led (100% of senior managers are women). 67% of employees are youth, 44% of employees are women, while 90% of their smallholder farmers are women. The company does not have gender-focused policies and gender sensitization training has not been implemented yet. However, the company

provides employees with individualized lockers, separate changing rooms for women, including showers and washrooms. Additionally, Forest Africa Zambia identified promotional and communication channels that work best for women (e.g., word of mouth, social media).

A summary profile is given below:

2X Criteria	2X Threshold	Current Company Position
<b>Entrepreneurship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>51% business ownership</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The business is founded by a woman</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Woman Owned (50%)</li> <li>Woman Founded (Yes)</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25% of senior management are women</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30% of the board are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100% of senior management are women</li> <li>No gender sensitization training has been done for senior management</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b>	<p><b>Internal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40% of the workforce are women</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One quality indicator beyond compliance (having a policy addressing women inequality beyond those required for compliance in place - with evidence of implementation/ commitment. e.g. wage equality, childcare, discrimination etc)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>44% of employees are women</li> <li>67% of employees are youth</li> <li>No gender sensitization training has been conducted for employees</li> <li>The company has no gender-focused policies</li> <li>The company provides gender-sensitive facilities including changing rooms, showers, bathrooms, and individualized lockers (lactation rooms are not offered yet)</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<p><b>External</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40% of the workforce(suppliers) are women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approx. 90% of smallholder farmers are women</li> <li>No recruitment activities focused on women have been carried out</li> </ul>
<b>Consumption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The product addresses women's specific needs</li> <li>Addresses a problem that disproportionately affects women</li> <li>Majority of customers are women</li> <li>Majority of beneficiaries are women</li> </ul>	<p><b>Product</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Products do not disproportionately affect women. However, the collection of wild fruits is more conducive for women and youth as it doesn't necessarily require the purchase of inputs</li> </ul> <p><b>Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The company has established effective means of communication for women (word of mouth, social media)</li> <li>Company's products are not currently marketed to target women</li> </ul>

## **Intervention Summary**

The company needs to maintain these standards while making some adjustments to be more inclusive including providing regular gender sensitization training, implementing gender-focused policies (e.g., recruitment activities, marketing), and establishing lactation rooms. The company has yet to set up a board but once it does, women, and where practical youth should be represented. These activities are summarized in the company's GESI action plan.

## 4.0 Conclusion

All 10 Accelerator Partners expressed a strong interest in the support of developing a GESI Action Plan and The Rallying Cry sought to provide by equipping them to strengthen the capacity and agency of men, women, and youth within their agribusiness value chain(s). To achieve this, The Rallying Cry developed individual *Gender Equality and Social Inclusion* (GESI) Action Plans for each Accelerator Partner to help address the barriers to inclusivity. Although The Rallying Cry will not be involved in the direct implementation, the plans will be useful in not only telling Accelerator Partners why and what they need to do to be more inclusive but also in showing them how to do it. This approach will support the objectives of the program by making sure the businesses are more inclusive and, therefore, more sustainable. Additionally, the Accelerator Partners were equipped to effectively engage with gender lens investors by understanding their gender performance and where opportunities lie for improvement.

For future cohorts, it would be beneficial to design the process in such a way that the Accelerator Partners and their teams are engaged and supported through the process of implementing at least one element, approach or strategy from the plans of the completion of the accelerator programming. This approach will allow them to benefit from active engagement in development and implementation of the GESI plans. Furthermore, to increase effectiveness of GESI plans, continuous collective ownership, relevance, and inclusive representation of main stakeholders is highly recommended. Impact of the GESI support process should be monitored over time and the continued participatory development will allow for transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness to ensure full utilization. This can be achieved through administration of future discussion sessions with the Accelerator Partners to obtain opinions about the value of GESI processes for their enterprises and existing or potential barriers to implementation of GESI-focused activities. Additionally, peer-to-peer learning facilitated through discussions could add additional value to planning of integration of GESI-activities, as well as monitoring and evaluation. Finally, participatory development also offers a platform for feedback sharing to ensure tailored GESI plans account for unique characteristics and changes of each enterprise and their business environment.