

# ÉLAN RDC: ADVANCING WOMEN'S ROLES IN AGRICULTURAL MARKET SYSTEMS



Photo Credit: ÉLAN RDC

## Activity Highlights

**Name:** ÉLAN RDC  
**Lead Institution:** Adam Smith International (ASI)  
**Country:** Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)  
**Donor:** DFID  
**Value of Award:** \$65 million  
**Period of Performance:** 2013-2018 (Phase I); 2019-2020 (Phase II), with possible 1-year extension

## INTRODUCTION

This case study focuses on how ÉLAN RDC identifies non-traditional<sup>18</sup> opportunities in agriculture and supporting markets, and leverages those opportunities to promote greater market inclusion of women at scale while also driving business growth. Informed by interviews with staff, it explores the analytical tools used to identify these opportunities, specific gender constraints ÉLAN RDC targets, and tactics they use to facilitate women's entry and expansion into new or upgraded roles. It also explores the measurement tools put in place to document results around women's empowerment and elicit valuable learning. Detailed in this case is ÉLAN RDC's vision and strategy for how they intend to facilitate changes in women's roles through the use of a role-change framework, and complementary and aligned monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) processes that measure results, help tweak approaches, and generate learning around what is and is not working.

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<sup>18</sup> *Traditional and non-traditional* are terms the research team introduced. They classify distinct types of opportunities afforded to males and females according to predominant gender and social norms. What is classified as a *traditional* or *non-traditional* role or opportunity varies across contexts, because gender and social norms differ greatly across geographies and environments. Traditional opportunities refer to sectors or roles where there is a large, or majority, share of women employed or participating; they are generally deemed "acceptable" or "appropriate" for women to perform as determined by prevailing gender and social norms. Non-traditional sectors are defined by the U.S. Department of Labor as sectors where 25 percent or less of those employed across the field are women. In this case study, non-traditional opportunities are defined as both (1) atypical gender roles in traditional sectors and/or the household, based on the intervention, and (2) any role in a non-traditional sector.

This case explores a core **learning question**: What formative analysis tools were used to identify non-traditional market opportunities, and how were these opportunities leveraged to promote greater market inclusion of women?

## KEY FINDINGS

1. **Focus on both the terms and nature of women's participation**, and the benefits derived from it, to facilitate more meaningful changes to women's positions within the market system. Clear and aligned expectations from donors are critical to achieving desired outcomes beyond the number of women who participate in market systems development (MSD) Activities or interventions.
2. **Use accessible tools and provide staff capacity-development opportunities** to help teams operationalize gender and women's economic empowerment (WEE) strategies in MSD Activities. In ÉLAN RDC, a role-change framework gives staff a vision of where and how changes can happen, as well as a sector-specific understanding of role changes that particular partnerships and interventions target.
3. **Ensure staff buy-in and ownership of a gender strategy**, because this is critical to getting partners to buy into inclusion as a business concept.
4. **Provide a clear value proposition or business case** to garner interest from private-sector partners to engage in concepts around gender.
5. **Consistently and strategically use data** to prove and improve the business case for upgrading women's roles in market systems, and enhance an Activity's performance and impact.

## ABOUT THE ACTIVITY

ÉLAN RDC is an MSD Activity that aims to reduce poverty in four geographical regions in the DRC by increasing the incomes of more than 1 million poor smallholder producers, entrepreneurs, and consumers by the end of 2020. The Activity does this by tackling the root causes of market failures and constraints, in partnership with more than 150 private-sector actors in finance, energy, transport, and agriculture,<sup>19</sup> through more than 100 interventions that offer technical advice, mobilize funds, and encourage networks to change their business practices. Cross-cutting sectors include Markets in Crisis, Business Development Services (or BDS), Business Enabling Environment, and WEE. At the end of 2019, ÉLAN RDC benefited more than 855,000 Congolese (31 percent women) through net positive income change (32 pounds, or approximately \$40, per person per annum on average) and has seen changes in business practices benefiting over 1,306,000 Congolese (30.5 percent women).

## CONTEXT

Women in the DRC experience high rates of poverty, insufficient access to basic services including education and healthcare, restricted access to and/or control over economic assets, and limited influence over decision making at all levels. Harmful practices such as child, early, and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, domestic and intimate partner violence, and marital rape are widespread, and deep-rooted cultural norms and practices have hindered progress on gender equality. Women work

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<sup>19</sup> Transport was only included in Phase I. Agricultural commodities consist of coffee, cacao, maize, and rice.

primarily in the informal sector, in low-skill, low-wage roles with limited potential for upward mobility. Additionally, women tend to take on multiple roles in the DRC—they function as principal income providers within a household, and also take on unpaid and “invisible” duties, such as caring for children and domestic tasks. This results in women’s triple burden and time poverty. While women are essential to the labor force in the DRC, they are also highly marginalized within it—participation does not necessarily mean that women derive benefit from their work.<sup>20</sup>

From 2013 to mid-2019, ÉLAN RDC has heightened their focus on integrating WEE into their market systems programming. For the first two years of implementation, ÉLAN RDC centered on devising approaches necessary to obtain the ambitious goal of reaching 1.7 million people,<sup>21</sup> half of whom should be women. This target prompted discussion with the Activity team about whether focusing simply on participation would be enough, given what they knew about women’s constraints to realizing the full benefits of their labor. In 2015, in dialogue with the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Activity committed to revising their gender strategy and focusing on both the terms and nature of women’s participation.

Starting in 2016, ÉLAN RDC began piloting a role-change framework that sought to promote WEE through six role changes as a vehicle for greater gender equality. These role changes were an attempt to apply traditional WEE domains to sector-specific opportunities that relate to women’s advancement into upgraded roles or functions. Now, in its second phase of implementation, ÉLAN RDC 1.2 has deepened its focus on fewer interventions in a smaller geographic area, with an emphasis on drawing in market actors to promote more systemic change. They continue to use the role-change framework to amplify their WEE work, including getting greater market actors’ buy-in and ownership. ÉLAN RDC 1.2 has also expanded their gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) work to include disability.

## STRATEGY AND LEARNING

### ANALYZING SECTORS AND IDENTIFYING MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

In the inception phase of the project in 2013, ÉLAN RDC carried out rigorous analyses of every economic sector in the country, and developed criteria for shortlisting the sectors they would work in. A component of the sector selection criteria was the extent to which the sector would generate opportunities for female participation, including looking at sectors where women were already participating and where upgrades would facilitate greater entry and expansion of women’s roles. Throughout the inception phase, DFID provided more clarity on their gender expectations, including a desire to reach 50 percent of men and 50 percent of women in Activity beneficiaries. This information strongly informed sector selection. Activity staff noted that, without that direction from the donor, the initial sector selection likely would have moved toward more economically attractive sectors, which tend to be dominated by men. While competitiveness was still a factor for ÉLAN RDC’s sector selection, it was not the only one, giving equal weight to potential for economic inclusion.

*It’s very hard to go back and try to bring in sectors that have more representation and opportunities for women, and so if your starting point is a bunch of sectors that*

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<sup>20</sup> More information available at :

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bc4882465019f632b2f8653/t/5ca615109140b74b435d77e0/1554388254679/ELAN+WEE+Learning+Series+Case+Study+I+FINAL.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> The target was subsequently scaled back in discussions with the donor.

*are dominated by men, the window, the room for maneuverability, is already weakened. – ÉLAN RDC staff*

ÉLAN RDC also conducted political economy analysis (PEA) and gender analysis at the regional levels, which were tied to the selected sectors. Sector- and context-specific constraints and opportunities for female participation were used to inform sector strategies. Staff noted that while insights from these analyses were valuable, they were not always fully integrated into Activity-level strategy due to pressure to move interventions forward upon sector selection, not fully allowing time for the gendered insights to be well integrated. Furthermore, focusing on reaching 1.7 million people, half of whom had to be women, influenced how the analysis was structured—it looked primarily at sectors with high female participation or opportunities for female participation. The analysis focused on where the numbers were and what it would take to reach 850,000 women. Staff felt that the analysis lacked an assessment of the social norms that affected roles and responsibilities of women and men, which would be critical in later stages to fully understand how to influence movement around role change within these sectors.

Now, in the second phase, ÉLAN RDC 1.2, DFID defined sectors in the solicitation and the Activity team validated them during the inception phase, which included looking at expanded opportunities for women.

#### **Learning from Formative Research Processes: How to Gather the Right Information at the Right Time to Build Informed Strategies Activity Staff Can Operationalize**

At the beginning of the project, ÉLAN RDC conducted preliminary research into male and female roles, but it lacked the depth of insight necessary to understand how these role change processes come about, what they consist of, where they align with market-based incentives, and how they need to be contextualized for different populations. While the Activity conducted further research to understand these dynamics, the pressure to move ahead with interventions, coupled with low GESI capacity of staff, made it difficult to integrate insights from the PEA and gender analyses into the intervention design and partner engagement strategies and approaches. This resulted in WEE efforts that were focused in a few select sectors and led by the GESI advisor, rather than diffused across the Activity with leadership and ownership from all Activity staff. Fuller analysis at the beginning would have allowed the team to dig deeper into gender constraints and opportunities, providing more nuanced understanding of the different market segments and ways to better advise businesses to reach women. Furthermore, having Activity staff understand how and why to use these data would have equipped them with necessary information to move approaches forward and set the tone for the Activity's WEE efforts. (See [Annex 2](#) in Youth, Women and Market Systems Development in Agriculture and Supporting Markets Landscape Analysis and Case Studies Report for ÉLAN RDC GESI Strategy, Guidance and Tools, and MEL Resources.)

## LEVERAGING OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S ROLE CHANGES

To help Activity staff and the donor better understand and operationalize WEE work within the Activity, ÉLAN RDC devised a role-change framework (see [Exhibit 15](#) below) that consists of six role changes specific to the DRC context and based on traditional WEE domains. These role changes apply to different market systems, span both supply and demand, and allow for spillover between economic, household, and community spheres. ÉLAN RDC believes this is a significant departure from many MSD programs because it goes beyond women's participation and incremental income increases toward more meaningful changes to women's positions within market systems, and defines gendered results as: a woman's role having been upgraded or expanded to derive more benefits. Under this model, a woman's role is considered to have progressed when as a result of an intervention, she experiences one or more of the following six changes over a sustained period:

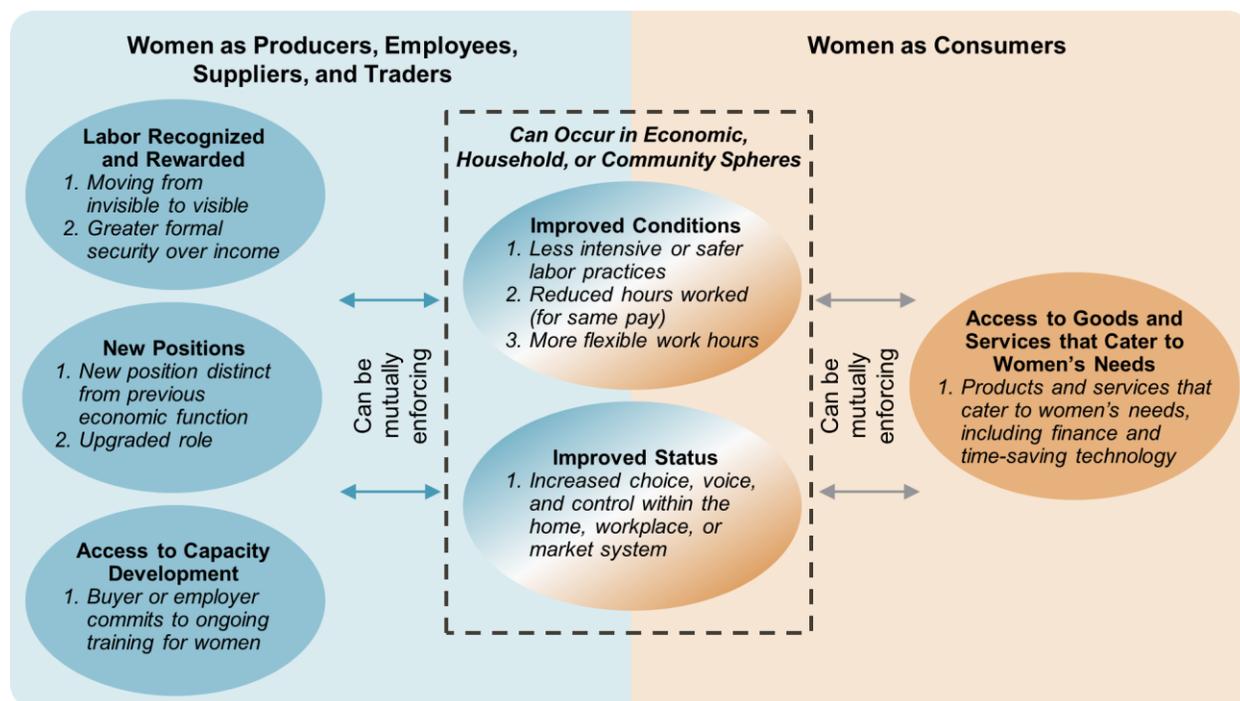
- Women's labor recognized and rewarded
- New position acquired or role upgraded
- Access to capacity development
- Improved working conditions
- Improved status
- Access to goods and services catering to women's needs

These role changes vary by intervention (e.g., consumer- vs. producer-focused) as shown in [Exhibit 15](#).

### **How the Role-Change Framework Can Be an Effective Strategy and Communication Tool**

- Communicates to Activity staff where there are opportunities to improve women's positions in market systems in language that resonates with what they know and connect with.
- Engages Activity staff in dialogue around WEE, overcoming biases that lead to the reluctance of Activity staff to buy into WEE, and focuses on where role changes make commercial sense.
- Depicts where women currently participate and a vision of role change to show a whole pathway of opportunities that can be generated if an Activity can shift gender norms, align approaches with market-based incentives, and convincingly make the case to market actors.
- Demonstrates to the donor how the Activity goes beyond merely counting women to shifting women's roles within the market spaces where the Activity operates.

Exhibit 15: Descriptions of the six role change types



To operationalize this framework, Activity staff develop a *role-change sector sheet* for each of the sectors ÉLAN RDC operates in. The sheet includes descriptions of women’s current roles in the sector, a vision of how women’s roles will change as a result of ÉLAN RDC’s engagement, whether it is a targeted or desired outcome, and suggested indicators and guidance on how they can be measured. Exhibit 16 offers an example excerpt<sup>22</sup> from the coffee and cocoa role-change sector sheet Activity staff filled out.

Exhibit 16: Excerpt from women’s role change sector sheet – coffee and cocoa

**Gender Constraints:** While women are present and active in the coffee and cocoa sectors, both are considered “male crops,” with men perceived as “genuine farmers” and women as “helpers” engaged as unpaid labor. This is largely due to customary law around land tenure—men own land and women work it, and entrenched gender norms where men are income-earners. Where women are active, they are producers and processors, and are absent from trading—the point at which information and remuneration are exchanged.

	Current Roles	Vision for Role Change	Targeted/ Desired	Suggested Indicator	Measurement
<b>New position</b>	Women are rarely recruited as lead farmers or agricultural instructors, and are absent from leadership positions within cooperative structures. Women’s participation in higher value roles—	Women increasingly take on leadership positions at farm level (e.g., as lead farmers and agricultural instructors) and at the cooperative level (e.g., as cooperative board members).	Targeted	<b># of women with new positions:</b> Women lead farmers and female agricultural instructors	Baseline established through partner key informant interviews and retrospective data

<sup>22</sup> This role change sector sheet is from phase one of ÉLAN RDC. Changes have been made to streamline the role change sheet in phase two of the Activity.

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	<b>Current Roles</b>	<b>Vision for Role Change</b>	<b>Targeted/ Desired</b>	<b>Suggested Indicator</b>	<b>Measurement</b>
	cupping and laboratory-based roles in coffee, and trading and packaging roles in cocoa—is minimal; however, these are roles women aspire to.			Women are on cooperative boards	Annual survey data
<b>Labor Recognized and Rewarded</b>	<p>Given the cooperative-based organizing structure for coffee and cocoa, women do not have employment contracts, and cooperative membership tends to be organized by smallholding and in their husbands’ names.</p> <p>Women typically work as unpaid laborers on their “husband’s farm” with few to no rights, and husbands control decisions around income. Female coffee producers have little leverage in negotiating better pricing.</p>	<p>Women either previously focused on subsistence activities or already engaged in coffee/cocoa in an invisible capacity have been able to enter/ become visible in the sector and are recognized as genuine farmers, through direct membership in cooperatives.</p> <p>As registered cooperative members, women increasingly sell their own product and receive a direct income.</p>	Targeted	<b># of women whose labor is rewarded:</b> Female members directly selling crops to cooperatives and/or other buyers	<p>Baseline established through partner key informant interviews and retrospective data</p> <p>Annual survey data</p>

Most of the role changes identified in the framework are those that are **feasible within the business case**—there is clear alignment between impact for women and incentive-driven, commercial models. Examples of inclusive business models demonstrated through ÉLAN RDC are presented in [Exhibit 17](#).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See ÉLAN RDC’s brief on Promoting Gender-Responsive Business Models in DRC at: [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bc4882465019f632b2f8653/t/5ca61698e2c4832b7065ea12/1554388643835/ELAN+RDC+WEE+Lessons+Learnt\\_Final\\_digital1.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bc4882465019f632b2f8653/t/5ca61698e2c4832b7065ea12/1554388643835/ELAN+RDC+WEE+Lessons+Learnt_Final_digital1.pdf)

Exhibit 17: Inclusive business models that demonstrate alignment between impact for women and private-sector incentives

SECTOR	MODEL	PRIVATE SECTOR INCENTIVE(S)	WEE IMPACT(S)	ROLE CHANGE
Access to Finance 	Rural agency banking model	Rural agency banking leads to gains for financial service providers by capturing an underserved consumer segment (low-income women), including higher loan repayment and savings rates. Expanded number of female agents are more profitable than men and help reach broader female consumer base.	Women have increased access to formal banking services, which provide greater opportunity to save, borrow, and have a bankable history—a prerequisite for accessing larger forms of finance. Women take greater control over their own income, spending, and saving.	Improved access to goods and services that cater to women’s needs, new position (female agents), and improved status, including decision making over income and household finances
Maize 	Gender-responsive contract farming model	Gender-responsive contract farming leads to increases in quality and productivity, with female contract farmers having demonstrated equal or greater productivity levels, and a reduction in side-selling.	More women are recruited as contract signatories, given concessionary land for production and/or granted land by their husbands (55 percent), earn more income, have an increased influence over its use, and demonstrate greater economic resilience.	Labor is recognized and rewarded, improved working conditions, and improved status, including decision-making power
Coffee 	Gender-impact product line model	Female product line ( <i>café femme</i> ) drives up quantity and quality that lead to increased revenue and income for members, secures high-value contracts between cooperative and end markets, taps into growing and lucrative “social impact” product market, and accesses new buyers and exporters.	Women enter a new, high-value sector, increasing value capture. Women increase their income and have greater influence over how it is used. Women take on leadership roles and men grant plots to their wives, registered in their name.	New position, labor is recognized and rewarded, improved working conditions, access to capacity development, and status

To further describe how these WEE impacts were achieved using market-driven approaches, the gender-impact product line called *café femme* was developed through a partnership with Muungano, a coffee cooperative based in South Kivu, and TWIN, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) focused on strengthening producer organizations and helping them foster long-term trading relationships in the DRC. This partnership aimed to pilot an inclusive business model, whereby female-produced coffee is quality-controlled, exported, marketed, and sold to Western markets willing to pay a premium. While a third of Muungano’s members were women, they had limited awareness of the commercial value in “social impact” end markets and the economic gains that could be realized by improving conditions of women’s participation. Using a range of market facilitation tactics, ÉLAN RDC and TWIN supported Muungano to improve coffee quality, develop an internal control system that enabled full traceability of coffee cherries to female farmers, and generate and share a convincing business case for the *café femme* model. ÉLAN RDC also helped to build capacity of local institutions, such as TWIN, to cultivate female leadership and address harmful gender norms. The pilot showed that by specifically investing in and targeting improvements in women’s production practices, Muungano could increase coffee cherry quality by 23 percent, selling approximately 42,300 pounds of women-produced coffee for a 120

cent/pound premium versus non-specialized coffee. The benefits for women were also substantial, including increases in women's incomes by nearly \$70 per annum, 55 percent of married women in the cooperative receiving plots from their husbands, nearly 30 percent of cooperative leadership positions being occupied by women, and 70 percent of Muungano's female members now involved in trading.

While the *café femme* model has been highly successful under ÉLAN RDC, ongoing challenges that limit the scalability of the model include: (1) limited absorptive capacity of female-produced coffee, because it represents a relatively small market share; (2) high upfront investment costs involved in setting up a traceability system and upgrading coffee quality; and (3) potential risks in focusing on an exclusively female product, including exacerbating women's time poverty and social and inter-household tensions. Under ÉLAN RDC 1.2, the Activity will look for ways to share the evidence on the commercial viability of the *café femme* model with market actors across sectors.

## MEASURING, EVALUATING, AND LEARNING FROM WOMEN'S ROLE CHANGES

To measure targeted or desired outcomes in women's role changes, ÉLAN RDC incorporates log-frame indicators at the output and outcome levels, which align with the six role changes listed above. The Activity does this by developing *Intervention Guides*<sup>24</sup> that include gender-responsive results chains and relevant role change(s) the ÉLAN RDC sector lead and the partner (i.e., market actor) jointly identify and discuss. Working closely with the MEL manager, the sector lead also ensures that in discussions with partners, the appropriate measurements for that targeted role change(s) are developed, and that targeted role change(s) and reporting requirements are integrated in the partnership agreement. The MEL manager pointed to the necessity of integrating these role changes in the results chains because *"that's what is ultimately leading the measurement plan and all the measurement activities,"* ensuring the Activity remains committed to achieving outcomes around it.

ÉLAN RDC uses a series of qualitative and quantitative SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely) proxy indicators to measure role changes at different moments in time and better estimate the number of women expanding or upgrading their roles. These types of indicators are especially important in dynamic and complex market systems, whereby women's roles can progress and regress in a non-linear fashion over time. Indicator data are collected from a variety of sources to make sure the full picture of women's role changes is captured by validating outcomes and soliciting insights from sector leads, partners, beneficiaries, association representatives, and so on. Data are collected through partner reporting, beneficiary and partner interviews, market actor scoping, and annual surveys on women's role change(s), which include questions on what women do, how they use their time, and decision-making power over income and household budgets. This information is analyzed and reported out to the donor, staff, partners, and market actors, when relevant, through analytical reports, *Intervention Guides*, partner reports, newsletters, and success stories. Three (3) years after the introduction of the framework, ÉLAN RDC facilitated upgraded roles for nearly 55,000 women.

Additionally, the ÉLAN RDC Monitoring and Results Measurement team undertakes ongoing and ad-hoc observational research to capture and understand unintended consequences, and/or how changes were facilitated and why. An example of this are the three qualitative learning studies prioritized under Phase I of ÉLAN RDC to develop a richer understanding of gender-differentiated impact, individual pathways to change, and intended and unintended outcomes of women's engagement in these business models. This

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<sup>24</sup> *Intervention Guides* are detailed resources developed and refined by and for Activity staff to guide interventions. They include the intervention results chain, the measurement plan, and results, among other things.

research elicited unintended outcomes around the potential of these models to exacerbate women's time poverty (and potential displacement of care and domestic work on children) and ongoing challenges related to deeply entrenched norms that limit WEE despite the fact that they were able to make important advances in shifting the normative environment through these pilots. Information gathered through these studies was compiled into a *Women's Economic Empowerment Learning Series*, intended to help ÉLAN RDC improve its own programming for women and build the evidence base around "what works" to economically empower women in the DRC using market-driven approaches.

## DEVELOPING GREATER STAFF BUY-IN, OWNERSHIP, AND CAPACITIES TO OPERATIONALIZE GENDER STRATEGY IN ÉLAN RDC

A critical component of operationalizing the role-change framework, and the WEE strategy more generally, is building staff capacity and ownership. The GESI lead for ÉLAN RDC noted that MSD interventions place a lot of emphasis on partners, and building their interest and capacity to change attitudes and practices; while this is important, it needs to be preceded by staff ownership and capacity development to fully operationalize and realize the benefits of these changes.

*I know everyone wants to see this transformation at the partner level, but I honestly feel like in most cases, we put the cart before the horse, where we overly focus on what's happening at the partner level without recognizing that the advocate for this, the mouthpiece for this change, isn't yet really comfortable in advocating for it fully.*  
– ÉLAN RDC staff

Tactics to build gender capacity, ownership, and buy-in of role-change framework among Activity staff in ÉLAN RDC consisted of:

- Establishing GESI champions in each region<sup>25</sup> to provide advice and support to intervention leads (e.g., assess and evaluate the activities to determine whether they meet criteria and understanding of gender)
- Helping sector teams understand that WEE/gender is not above other priorities, but is core to any kind of value proposition given to partners
- Making sector teams responsible for gender integration in partnerships, leading to greater ownership over WEE work among staff and more meaningful integration
- Ongoing staff training on women's role changes; early introduction of role-change concepts and strategy so that staff can align, define what can be done, and determine roles and responsibilities
- Coaching programs with senior managers
- Monthly newsletter featuring role changes to reinforce the concepts and make them practical
- Guidance note to staff around what role changes might look like in the context of COVID-19<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> This approach was employed under Phase I of ÉLAN RDC. Under Phase II (or ÉLAN RDC I.2), the Activity has not used this approach, because the geographic scope and Activity team are much smaller.

<sup>26</sup> For more information see: <https://www.elanrdc.com/latest-news/2020/5/5/measuring-progression-in-womens-roles-special-covid-19>

- Pause-and-reflect sessions focusing exclusively on GESI and role changes within specific sectors
- Conducting stock-taking exercises to elicit areas for further staff capacity development on gender and areas where greater ownership and buy-in are needed

As a result of the diverse tactics ÉLAN RDC employed to build staff capacities and ownership of gender work, the GESI team lead noted that their role changed from convincing staff of the need for gender integration in their work to equipping them with the tools and resources they needed to operationalize the work.

*With ÉLAN, that there's [sic] more people on the team that are genuinely bought into the concept and are excited about it, and so my role shifts to, instead of pleading with them for the case, it's now shifted towards, "Oh, here's resources... [sic] Let me just arm you with more guidance and how to do it well," which is an exciting role to play. – ÉLAN RDC staff*

## CONCLUSIONS

ÉLAN RDC's role-change framework was effective in articulating a vision of women's empowerment in market systems that focused on upgraded and expanded roles for women beyond where they currently participated and incremental increases in income. The visualization in [Exhibit 18: ÉLAN RDC: Opportunities to Progress Women's Roles in the Coffee and Maize Sectors](#) shows key points at which ÉLAN RDC prioritized, analyzed, and responded to constraints that limited both market actors and women, as well as opportunities to progress women's roles in agricultural sectors.

## Exhibit 18: ÉLAN RDC: Opportunities to Progress Women’s Roles in the Coffee and Maize Sectors

### OPPORTUNITIES TO PROGRESS WOMEN’S ROLES | Coffee Sector

In 2014, ÉLAN RDC partnered with coffee cooperative Muungano and NGO TWIN to **pilot sales to ethical trade markets from female producers**. Proven successful, at least two other neighboring cooperatives adopted the business model.

WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT CONSTRAINTS	MARKET CONSTRAINTS	INTERVENTION	RESULTS	ROLE CHANGES*
<b>PRODUCTION / POST HARVEST / PROCESSING</b> Not registered as cooperative members; land in husbands' name Rarely recruited in 'lead farmer' role; absent in coop leadership Viewed as "helpers", limited access to extension Poor working conditions; no safety equipment	<b>Commercial performance of the coffee cooperative is constrained by quality issues and low-value contracts, with limited knowledge of how to secure contracts in high-value export markets.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging men and women in shifting gender dynamics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>55% of men granted plots to their wives, registered in their names</li> </ul>	Improved Status
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership training</li> <li>Cultivating confidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 of 7 coop board positions, and 30% of coop leadership, are women</li> </ul>	New Positions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstration plots and training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in cherry quality</li> <li>Women seen as genuine, productive farmers</li> </ul>	Access to Capacity Development
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to labor saving technologies</li> <li>Safety training (e.g. applying pesticides)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less time needed for labor-intensive tasks</li> </ul>	Improved Conditions
<b>MARKETING / SALES</b> Concentrated in low value-capture roles Not involved in marketing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traceability to female farmers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>70% of female coop members involved in trading</li> <li>Increase in and control over women's incomes</li> </ul>	Labor Recognized & Rewarded
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing women-only produced coffee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Muongano successfully sold women-produced coffee at a premium</li> </ul>	

#### ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

**Win-Win Opportunity:** By targeting women and improving roles in production, the private sector increases coffee quantity and quality; diversifies products; increases revenues; and improves supply chain reliability. Women access lucrative end markets, improving incomes and status.

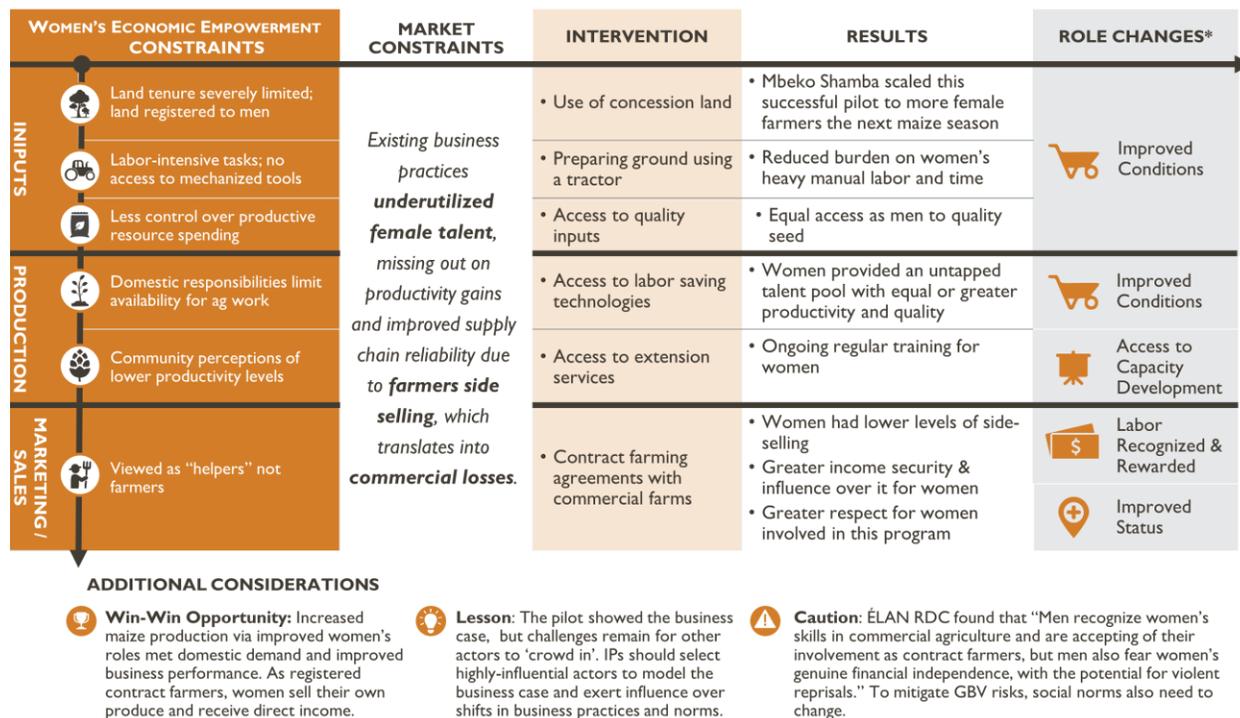
**Lesson:** (1) The pilot showed the business case but requires up-front investment. Without donor support, cooperatives may not have the \$\$ or risk appetite to pilot/adopt the model. (2) Their target segment (high-end, ethical trade for women-only produced coffee) has limited absorptive capacity – so need to test, expand market channels.

**Caution:** ÉLAN RDC found risks in stirring up social tensions and exacerbating women's time poverty by privileging women's labor. In the future, consider improving women's engagement through more mainstream, non-segregated models, complemented by work to shift social norms that improve women's labor burdens.

\* Role Change categories based on ELAN RDC's Role Change Framework

## OPPORTUNITIES TO PROGRESS WOMEN'S ROLES | Commercial Maize

In 2014, ÉLAN RDC partnered with commercial farm Mbeko Shamba in Haut-Katanga to pilot an out-grower scheme that targeted women. This **gender-responsive contract farming model** demonstrated promising results in improving the roles of women AND maize production.



As Exhibit 18 shows, market analyses and formative research helped contextualize these role changes, including the targeted constraints and pathways by which changes came about. This information then fed directly into the design of sector-specific strategies and role-change sheets that clearly articulated current roles and constraints, vision for change, and measurements to monitor and evaluate progression to those changes. While there were some highly successful examples of employing MSD tactics to stimulate changes in women's roles, including making a convincing business case, this has not been fully operationalized across ÉLAN RDC's broader portfolio, with many citing the private sector not being convinced of the business case and not always having the data necessary to convince them. Activity staff are working on tackling this under ÉLAN RDC 1.2. Measurements on women's role changes and associated MEL tools are critical to understanding not just the extent to which women participate, but also what the terms of that participation look like according to the six role changes.

One unanticipated learning from this case study is the degree to which internal capacity-building efforts and greater ownership and buy-in among staff are critical to fully operationalize strategies focused on WEE. Many ÉLAN RDC staff interviewed for this case study felt that the capacity development efforts underpinned all of the GESI work, with one staff member indicating it was paramount to:

*Get your house in order. You need to have the full power of your technical and program management teams behind the integration of gender considerations in everything you do, both represented in your project makeup, but as well as [sic] in the technical and operational aspects of the project, your tool design, your systems,*

*and at the end of the day, the data that your team members are presenting to business partners. – ÉLAN RDC staff*

While ÉLAN RDC has had great success in identifying sector-specific market opportunities where women's roles can be upgraded or expanded, there are still challenges to fully realizing robust gender results, including:

- Business partners continue to have low interest in engaging in concepts around gender without a convincing business case or value proposition given high upfront investment costs, perceived riskiness of investing in inclusive business models, and deeply entrenched gender and social norms. Examples in the maize, coffee, and financial services sectors detailed in this report show there are opportunities to generate localized commercial cases for targeting women, and they are highly influential in getting market actors to adopt more inclusive business models and practices. More evidence is needed on to what extent these commercial cases made with discrete Activity-supported actors influence other market actors to adopt similar models (described more in the point below).
- Data, figures, and clear results speaking to the benefit of women's upgraded roles are needed to influence attitudes and behaviors of market actors (i.e., businesses), program participants (i.e., male and female farmers), and Activity staff. Ongoing monitoring, reflection, and learning can help sustain momentum and move away from any "check-the-box" attitudes. This information needs to be widely disseminated and discussed with partners to generate curiosity and influence market actors to adopt more inclusive business models. Working directly through Activity staff to communicate this message is one way to do this, but there are likely also opportunities to build greater champions within the network of partners ÉLAN RDC works with to be mouthpieces for advantages of more inclusive business models.

*I feel like for ÉLAN as a program, it's rather understood how it[s] [role changes] can be valuable. At the partner level, often, it remains a tick-the-box exercise. Also, if they are not told to do so, they will not do because basically, they don't see the value in it. – ÉLAN RDC staff*

## CONTACT

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