

**Lessons Learned:**

# GEDSI and Katalis

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## Executive Summary

There is growing recognition of the importance of integrating gender into trade policy. Yet, practical guidance for applying a GEDSI lens in trade programs remains limited. The closure of the first phase of Katalis, an innovative, five-year aid-for-trade program supporting implementation of the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IA-CEPA), offers a timely opportunity to reflect on progress and share lessons for future phases and the broader trade and development community.

As with many trade agreements and aid-for-trade programs, neither IA-CEPA nor Katalis were designed with a gender or disability lens. Yet, an early decision by the program leadership to mainstream gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) considerations resulted in a trade program that produced important commercial and social outcomes for diverse groups. This paper reflects on that journey and draws lessons for designing more inclusive trade programs.

Key insights include:

- Katalis was designed as a technical mechanism to enhance trade under IA-CEPA. GEDSI was later added as a cross-cutting consideration. This enabled the program to successfully mainstream GEDSI across the investment portfolio, but it limited the program's capacity to address structural barriers excluding women, people with disabilities, and rural communities. Expansion into sectors with higher female participation created entry points, but Katalis lacked the mechanisms and the timeline needed to drive systemic change.
- The program's business partnership model, designed to de-risk and test bilateral trade opportunities, proved effective for larger firms with capacity to scale. However, it is less suitable for SMEs and women-led enterprises facing entrenched barriers like limited access to capital and networks.
- Technical interventions, particularly in market access, helped address regulatory barriers but did not tackle the social norms and gendered constraints that shape who can benefit from reforms. Skills activities showed potential for GEDSI outcomes but required targeted design and supporting measures to realise their full inclusion potential. Market integration efforts supported cross-border deals but largely benefited better-resourced businesses. Broader inclusion will require complementary measures which address the structural barriers GEDSI groups face.
- Communications efforts provided a strategic and flexible platform to raise awareness, promote inclusive narratives, and showcase women and people with disabilities in trade. However, without sustained engagement, awareness alone limited the influence on business practice.
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems integrated GEDSI considerations into planning, but lacked clear targets and pathways for driving systemic change.
- The GEDSI approach laid a solid foundation and proved that trade can contribute to both commercial and social outcomes, but greater operational flexibility and targeted tools were needed to overcome structural constraints.

Looking ahead, more intentional strategies, long-term engagement, and operational tools will be essential to realising IA-CEPA's potential for inclusive trade and investment.

# 1. Introduction

In international trade, the importance of applying a robust gender lens: one that recognises the different and overlapping roles, endowments, and experiences of women is well established. Evidence shows that trade policies can have unintended and differentiated impacts on gender equality, sometimes creating opportunities for higher wages and skills upgrading, while at other times exacerbating burdens and barriers to women's participation.<sup>1</sup> These negative impacts are shaped by factors such as the types of jobs women hold, the industries where they are concentrated, and differences in consumption patterns. Moreover, women face both gender-specific and gender-intensified constraints in trade including border-related barriers such as tariffs and harassment, as well as extra-territorial challenges such as legal discrimination, limited access to education, finance, and digital technologies.<sup>2</sup>

**Reflecting this growing awareness, trade policy is increasingly viewed through a gender lens.** The robustness of the lens, however, varies substantially across trade agreements. Research shows that mainstreaming gender in trade policies, can result in different gender-related provisions in trade agreements. These can range from relatively low commitment provisions such as reaffirmation of parties' existing commitments to gender equality to more robust provision such as those which explicitly call for measures for the promotion of gender equality and women's economic empowerment and cooperation mechanisms to promote gender equality. Specific policy provisions for gender equality (GE) and women's economic empowerment (WEE) are important because of the gender specific and gender intensified constraints faced by women in trade.<sup>3</sup>

**Mainstreaming gender** in trade policy requires that due consideration be given to gender inequalities and implications at the outset and at every stage of the trade policy process. In other words, at (i) the stage of generating evidence to inform decisions on trade policy; (ii) the stage of designing policies, including the negotiation and adoption of new international trade agreements; (iii) the stage of implementing trade policies; and (iv) subsequent monitoring of the impacts of trade or trade-related rules (IISD, 2021).

**Development partner-funded trade programs, with either trade promotion or facilitation objectives, increasingly have explicit GE or WEE objectives, in addition to mainstreaming gender considerations.** While there is growing awareness and emerging guidance on the topic, there has been only modest sharing of insights and lessons learned to date. For this reason, Katalis, a bilateral trade and investment program under the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IA-CEPA), provides a useful case study to reflect on how gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) objectives are integrated within trade and investment programming. This document is intended for policymakers and development professionals.

This document opens with an overview of the program's objectives, design and operating model, and then examines the GEDSI approach and results. It concludes with a summary of key insights and recommendations for future trade programs including the next phase of Katalis.

<sup>1</sup> [Women and Trade: The role of trade in promoting gender equality, World Bank, 2020.](#)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> [Mainstreaming Gender in Trade Policy: Practice, evidence and the way forward, IISD, 2021.](#)

## 2. Katalis Overview

*This section provides an overview of the program objectives, design and operating model and explores the associated strengths and challenges in contributing to GEDSI-related outcomes and impact.*

IA-CEPA ECP Katalis (Katalis) is a unique, five-year (2020-25) government-backed business development program unlocking the vast economic potential of the partnership between Australia and Indonesia.

Established under the [Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement Economic Cooperation Program \(IA-CEPA ECP\)](#), Katalis complements existing Australian development program activities with a commercially oriented, bilateral approach.

**The overarching program goal is to maximize the benefits of IA-CEPA, support trade and investment, improve market access, and promote sustainable inclusive economic growth in Indonesia.** The program has three main components: market access, market integration, and skills exchange, which are supported by three cross-cutting components: communications, monitoring and evaluation, and gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI). This integrated structure ensured that each core component could draw on cross-cutting expertise to strengthen the relevance and impact of its activities, while maintaining clear workstreams and accountability. At the same time, the program's collaborative organisational culture enabled regular coordination and knowledge sharing between technical and cross-cutting teams, allowing for integrated approaches and adaptive responses to emerging opportunities.

**The program's design reflects a traditional view of trade as a technical domain, with limited attention to the gendered and social dynamics that influence who benefits.** By focusing on technical areas such as standards compliance, market facilitation, and capacity building, and positioning GEDSI as a cross-cutting rather than core component, trade was implicitly treated as gender-neutral. While this is understandable given that Katalis was not originally designed with GEDSI-specific objectives or targets, the framing risks obscuring how trade policies and outcomes are experienced differently by women and other marginalised groups.

**Insight:** Structuring the program primarily around technical pillars, while treating GESI as a cross-cutting rather than central focus, implicitly framed trade as a technical exercise. This approach underplayed the significant influence of gender norms, social dynamics, and power relations on trade processes and outcomes.

**Impact:** The diverse ways in which trade policies affect women and other marginalised groups may be overlooked or insufficiently addressed.

Katalis was originally conceived to support trade and investment in agrifood (particularly grains), advanced manufacturing (particularly Electric Vehicles), and skills (particularly Technical Vocational Education), which **limited GEDSI entry points**. During the initial years of the program (2021 – 2022), this sectoral scope was expanded to formally cover digital services; tourism; agriculture and agtech (in addition to agrifood); health; green energy; professional, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and telecommunication services; financial services and the creative economy. This expansion created increased opportunities to engage women and support gender-inclusive outcomes, particularly in sectors like health, education, and creative industries, where women are more represented in the workforce and as business owners. At the same time, it also opened the door to working with more micro and small enterprises (MSEs), many of which are women-led, bringing new opportunities but also posing additional challenges in terms of outreach, capacity building, and the ability to meet export standards and access financing.

**Insight:** The expansion Katalis's sectoral scope to include areas where women are more active, such as health, education, and creative industries, created new GEDSI entry points for Katalis.

**Impact:** This expansion created opportunities for more inclusive trade and investment, however, it also introduced challenges. Women-led businesses and MSEs often face structural barriers requiring more tailored, longer-term support than short-term catalytic interventions typically allow.

## 2.1. Operating model

*This section presents Katalis ways of work with businesses, governments and other stakeholders and explores the strengths and limitations of the model in contributing to GEDSI-related outcomes and impact.*

### 2.1.1. Business partnerships

**Katalis's co-creation model accelerates bilateral trade opportunities through business-led partnerships, but is less suited to tackling the systemic barriers faced by women-led and micro and small enterprises.** Business partnerships are the foundation of the majority of Katalis work and begin with a concept note that outlines a proposed trade or investment opportunity and then are co-developed with business partners. If endorsed by Katalis Senior Leadership Team and then DFAT, the concept is expanded into a detailed Activity Plan, refined

collaboratively to ensure it aligns with program objectives and commercial interests. These partnerships are designed to be catalytic in nature, aiming to de-risk or unlock specific trade and investment opportunities between Indonesia and Australia. While this model helps transform ideas into action by testing the interest and viability of bilateral trade and investment opportunities, its discrete input structure requires businesses to have the time, resources, and technical capacity to sustain newly established relationships. This model is not suited to addressing the deeper systemic biases and structural constraints that disproportionately affect women-led enterprises and micro and small enterprises (MSEs). These groups often face entrenched barriers, such as limited access to finance, markets, and networks, which require longer-term, sustained engagement to overcome.

#### Katalis Investment criteria

1. Maximises commercial outcomes of IA-CEPA
2. Includes financial or in-kind co-contribution from the beneficiary or beneficiaries
3. Mutually beneficial to Indonesia and Australia and aligned with bilateral and/or regional interests
4. Prioritises catalytic outcomes
5. **Delivers gender equity and social inclusion**
6. Politically feasible and practical
7. Reflects Indonesia and Australia's comparative advantages

**Insight:** The model effectively tests the viability of bilateral trade opportunities, but its presumes that businesses have the capacity, resources, and expertise to maintain and grow these relationships independently.

**Impact:** It does not address the systemic barriers that disproportionately hinder women-led and micro and small enterprises, resulting in mixed outcomes for these groups.

### 2.1.2. Government requests

Government-requested activities related to specific IA-CEPA Side Letters allow Katalis to address broader, systemic constraints such as those facing women-led businesses with more flexibility but remain limited in scope. These requests are submitted annually, then discussed and refined through a consultation process with the submitting government agency. Unlike Katalis business partnerships, which directly benefit specific businesses, these government-requested activities often target a broader range of stakeholders, including government officials, industry associations, and groups of businesses. This allowed Katalis to address more systemic constraints affecting women-led businesses, such as access to finance.

While these requests have opened important pathways to engage on gender issues, the resources allocated to these activities remain consistent with the catalytic, targeted approach that characterizes Katalis business partnerships. As a result, the activities have been effective in raising awareness of the challenges but are not designed to sustainably address the underlying root causes as described in the case study below.

#### Case Study: Support to [women-Led SME Forum](#): Strengthening Support for Export Readiness

In response to a request from Indonesia's Ministry of Trade (MoT), Katalis, together with the MoT and the Asian Development Bank, co-hosted a forum for women-led businesses engaged in trade. The forum convened more than 300 women SME owners, both in person and online, and was designed to provide practical guidance on navigating trade barriers as well as opportunities for networking.

To maximise the relevance and utility of the Forum, Katalis implemented several practical initiatives:

- **Trade Finance Training:** Delivered a tailored session addressing a core constraint identified by women-led businesses: limited access to trade finance and understanding of export financing options.
- **Panel Discussion on Access to Finance:** Brought together key stakeholders, including financial institutions and women entrepreneurs, to share experiences and explore opportunities to reduce gender barriers in export financing.
- **Research Brief:** Produced a concise summary of the discussions and recommendations emerging from the Forum, helping to document key barriers and inform future engagement.

#### Limitations and Lessons Learned

The Forum, like other Katalis activities in this area (e.g. IDX 200), raised awareness and created space for dialogue and practical learning, important outcomes unto themselves. However, its standalone nature and lack of integration into a more comprehensive strategy to support women's engagement in trade and investment limited its potential impact.

Katalis is often pulled in two directions: on one hand, towards larger activities, working alongside large firms that are better positioned to take advantage of IA-CEPA and catalytic trade and investment opportunities; on the other, towards SMEs and women-led businesses that face more structural barriers to cross-border trade and investment. However, the tools and approaches used to support these two groups are largely the same, despite their differing capacities, resources, and support needs. This can limit the program's ability to tailor support and fully address the distinct challenges faced by smaller and more marginalized enterprises.

#### Recommendations

To unlock the potential of women-led SMEs in trade and investment, future efforts should focus on:

- **Developing a multi-year, cross-sectoral program to address financial, regulatory, and capacity constraints.**
- **Supporting women-led SMEs to integrate into regional and global value chains through targeted investment facilitation and business-to-business linkages.**

**Insight:** Government-requested activities provided Katalis with a mechanism to engage a broader range of stakeholders, including government agencies, industry associations, and business groups. This enabled the program to address more systemic constraints, such as women-led businesses' access to finance, that may not be easily addressed through private sector partnerships alone.

**Impact:** These requests created valuable entry points to engage on gender equality issues and highlight systemic barriers. The catalytic, targeted nature of the activities meant they were effective in raising awareness but were not designed to address underlying causes in a sustained or transformative way.

### 2.1.3. Research and data analytics

Katalis's research and data analytics activities apply a gender lens to support evidence-based approaches to inclusive trade and investment. The gender analysis undertaken to inform the Trade in Services Chapter Review demonstrates how gender considerations are systematically incorporated into trade policy analysis, assessing both participation and distributional impacts. In addition, Katalis has conducted a series of more targeted studies, including a gender analysis of the IA-CEPA at program inception, and more recently, research examining the [opportunities and constraints facing women-led Small and Medium Size Enterprises \(SMEs\) in trade](#).

This body of research provides important insights and helps build the GEDSI evidence base for trade, however, much of it remains somewhat siloed from market-facing work. As a result, its reach and influence are often limited to technical audiences, with fewer opportunities to inform broader market analysis or directly shape commercial decision-making. At the same time, research products such as [Market Insights](#) and [bilateral trade diagnostics](#) typically integrate gender at a more surface level, focusing on headline participation data without systematically analysing structural barriers, sectoral segregation, or the differentiated impacts of trade on women and or people with disabilities. This reflects both persistent data constraints (e.g. limited availability of disaggregated trade and enterprise data) and the commercial orientation of many research outputs, which often prioritise market access and investment facilitation objectives.

**Insight:** Katalis's research and analytics apply a gender lens to strengthen the evidence base for inclusive trade and investment, offering valuable insights into the participation of women-led SMEs and the gendered impacts of IA-CEPA. However, this work often operates in parallel to core market-facing activities, reducing its potential to shape commercial decisions and broader market analysis.

**Impact:** While these studies contribute to the GEDSI knowledge base and serve technical audiences well, their practical influence on trade and investment decisions is limited. More commercially focused outputs, like Market Insights, tend to reflect gender considerations only superficially hindered by scarce disaggregated data and a stronger emphasis on market access than on structural barriers or inclusion outcomes.

### 2.1.4. Networking and relationship management

Networking and relationship management represent a core, though often implicit, function of Katalis's operating model. These are essential to surfacing opportunities across a wide range of sectors, building trust among diverse stakeholders, and facilitating the partnerships and policy dialogue necessary to advance Katalis trade and investment objectives. The gender balance among key government counterparts, particularly within

BAPPENAS, Indonesia's planning and development ministry, and other relevant agencies, has contributed to relatively strong gender representation across the broader Katalis stakeholder network. In addition, Katalis's priority sectors such as health and education, where women are well represented in the workforce, albeit less so in management and decision-making roles, have further supported engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders. However, there remains an opportunity to adopt a more intentional approach to networking and stakeholder engagement to actively cultivate more gender-equitable and inclusive professional networks, including targeted and sustained engagement with women's business associations, women in leadership, and organisations representing people with disabilities.

**Insight:** Networking and relationship management are central to Katalis's operating model, with gender balance among key counterparts contributing to diverse stakeholder engagement. However, these inclusive networks have developed largely organically rather than through intentional design.

**Impact:** Without a deliberate strategy, opportunities to proactively cultivate more gender-equitable and inclusive professional networks may be missed.

## 2.2. Technical areas

*This section presents Katalis's components and cross-cutting technical areas and explores the strengths and challenges associated with contributing to GEDSI-related outcomes and impact.*

### 2.2.1. Market access

**The market access component of Katalis is designed to reduce barriers to bilateral trade and investment.** Addressing regulatory, policy, and institutional constraints that affect businesses in both Indonesia and Australia is core to the work. Research on bilateral trade and investment, alongside policy analysis, comprises a large part of Katalis's market access activities. This research helps inform Katalis's work with businesses and industry associations to understand and navigate regulatory requirements. Supporting Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs) for professional services such as accounting and [nursing](#) is another key focus. As noted above, the research includes gender and disability lenses but is often limited in depth due to the program's overarching trade and investment facilitation objectives.

**MRAs, particularly in sectors with significant representation of women like nursing, are viewed as an important vehicle for contributing to gender equality.** Like much of Katalis's work, however, the focus is on the technical task of securing agreements between professional bodies in Indonesia and Australia. It does not extend to addressing the social norms that significantly influence women's mobility and their ability to take advantage of MRAs and labour mobility schemes more broadly.

**Insight:** Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs), particularly in sectors like nursing where women are strongly represented, have the potential to contribute to gender equality by facilitating cross-border labour mobility.

**Impact:** These technical agreements create enabling conditions but do not address the social norms and structural barriers that continue to limit women's mobility and ability to fully benefit from MRAs and labour mobility schemes. Without complementary measures, the gender equality potential of MRAs may not be fully realised.

### 2.2.2. Skills

Katalis's work on skills development is grounded in the goal of improving workforce capabilities to support inclusive economic growth. The core focus of this work has been brokering agreements between [Australian Registered Training Organizations \(RTOs\)](#) and [Technical and Further Education \(TAFEs\)](#) and [select digital platforms in Indonesia](#), resulting in the development and delivery of market-relevant skills, particularly in high-potential sectors such as digital services and health. In addition to the commercial potential, this focus reflects Katalis's interest in inclusion and the fact that digital delivery models offer significant opportunities for inclusion by lowering costs, accommodating a wide range of disabilities, and providing more neutral learning environments that are less influenced by traditional gender or social stereotypes. Katalis has also developed guidance for content developers to further maximise inclusivity.

Several pilot initiatives illustrate both the potential and limitations of Katalis's approach and its contributions to addressing gender-related barriers through skills development. [The partnership between Deakin University and DAMRI](#), an Indonesian State-Owned Enterprise (SOE), directly targets gender constraints by delivering leadership training to support women's participation in management and leadership roles within Indonesia's transport sector, a field where women have been significantly underrepresented. The [Living Well Communities pilot](#), while not explicitly designed as a gender intervention, contributes to gender equality by upskilling and supporting the employment of nurses, a workforce predominantly comprised of women, and by improving the accessibility and quality of care services. In doing so, it has the potential to reduce unpaid care burdens that disproportionately fall on women, and to expand women's participation in the formal workforce, consistent with Katalis's broader efforts to leverage care economy investments for inclusive economic growth. In contrast, the [partnership with ODG](#) to deliver electrical trades training highlights the inherent limitations of the Katalis approach: while the pilot expands technical skills in a high-demand sector, it does not address the underlying gender norms and occupational segregation that limit women's entry into male-dominated trades. Skills training alone does not guarantee labour market entry or upward mobility, particularly for women and other marginalised groups facing structural barriers such as caregiving responsibilities, discriminatory workplace practices, or limited transport and digital access.

**Insight:** Skills development activities have strong potential to deliver GEDSI outcomes, but inclusive impacts are not automatic. The extent to which training contributes to gender equality, disability and social inclusion depends on factors such as the sector focus, the design of training content, and the broader enabling environment that supports or constrains participation and employment outcomes for women and other marginalised groups.

**Impact:** Without deliberate attention to sector selection, gender-responsive training design, and structural barriers in the labour market, skills initiatives may reinforce existing inequalities. Complementary measures are often required to address occupational segregation, caregiving responsibilities, and workplace discrimination to ensure that women and marginalised groups can fully benefit from new skills and employment opportunities.

### 2.2.3. Market integration

Market integration efforts successfully brokered high-value partnerships with larger firms, but the model's scale and structure limit accessibility for smaller businesses facing deeper entry barriers. Facilitating and supporting business-to-business partnerships is the primary approach for building these connections, with networking and relationship-building playing a critical role in surfacing viable business opportunities. Katalis's mandate, to facilitate large-scale, catalytic trade and investment, and its operational approach have meant that much of the market integration work has focused on larger businesses and investors, which are better positioned to navigate regulatory environments, meet compliance standards, and mobilise the resources required for sustained cross-border trade. Projects such as [Aspen Medical's large-scale health infrastructure](#)

[investment](#) and [Privy's expansion into the Australian digital services market](#) illustrate how Katalis has brokered commercially significant partnerships with firms that have the scale, capital, and institutional capacity to take advantage of IA-CEPA opportunities. While these partnerships generate substantial economic and employment benefits, the model is inherently less accessible to smaller businesses, which often face greater structural barriers to cross-border market entry as illustrated by the following case study.

**Case study: [Cocoa Activity](#)**

Katalis aims to unlock inclusive trade and investment opportunities between Indonesia and Australia by increasing market access, facilitating deeper market integration, and strengthening skills and labour mobility. A core element of this approach is the co-design of pilot activities with businesses to address specific trade and investment constraints. One of the program's key strengths is its ability to respond swiftly, offering targeted support and timely risk mitigation to capitalise on emerging opportunities.

One such initiative was Katalis's support to a cohort of mainly small sized Indonesian premium cocoa and chocolate businesses, including five women-led businesses, to explore opportunities in the Australian market. The activity included market research, targeted capacity building, and participation in Melbourne's Bean to Bar Chocolate Festival, all designed to facilitate Indonesian market entry.

While it provided valuable exposure and led to initial export outcomes, the light-touch design, typical of Katalis support, limited its impact as it did not sufficiently account for the underlying structural and practical constraints the small businesses face. Small, women-led businesses in Indonesia, as globally, face a range of entrenched barriers that restrict their participation in trade, especially in export markets. These include limited access to finance, business networks, and market intelligence: constraints that are often more severe for women than for men. Unpaid care responsibilities further limit their ability to travel and engage in networking. Additionally, gender norms and biases constrain their mobility, leadership opportunities, and influence within supply chains.

**Key Lessons:**

- **Scope limits long-term impact:** The pilot's limited scope and absence of structured follow-on support meant promising leads weren't fully realized. Some businesses achieved initial exports, but these were sometimes one-offs, lacking the sustained market facilitation and strategic guidance needed to solidify long-term trade relationships. For small, women-led businesses particularly, the assistance failed to tackle deeper, structural constraints, leaving them without the tools or time to sustain momentum.
- **Gender-sensitive trade facilitation is critical:** While the pilot ensured good representation of women leaders, future efforts must go beyond participation metrics. Truly inclusive trade and investment facilitation starts with sector-specific gender analysis to identify differentiated barriers and design tailored interventions. Crucially, activities should measure gender-differentiated outcomes and adapt to ensure equitable benefits.

**Recommendations:**

- Design must account for the starting points of small business, with appropriate pacing, resources, and tools.
- Future initiatives with women-led business, particularly, should offer longer-term, phased support with sustained and tailored technical assistance and market facilitation.
- Adopt a gender-transformative trade promotion approach that systematically addresses structural barriers for women entrepreneurs.

**Insight:** The Katalis Investment Criteria lend themselves to commercially viable, cross-border deals benefitting larger firms with the scale, capital and institutional capacity to navigate regulatory and operational complexities. Smaller enterprises, women-led businesses, and other marginalised groups often face higher barriers to entry, limiting their participation in emerging bilateral opportunities.

**Impact:** Without deliberate strategies to lower structural barriers and proactively support the inclusion of smaller and underrepresented businesses, market integration efforts risk reinforcing existing patterns of exclusion. Complementary measures, such as targeted capacity building, inclusive supply chain development, gender-responsive investment promotion, and policy dialogue, are needed to ensure that a broader range of businesses can benefit from the growth in bilateral trade and investment.

#### 2.2.4. GEDSI Approach

*This section presents Katalis GEDSI approach, its strengths and weaknesses.*

**Katalis implements a [multi-pronged approach to GEDSI](#).** It mainstreams GEDSI considerations across activities. GEDSI is one of seven investment criteria against which business partnerships (and Katalis financial contribution) are evaluated.

**Insight:** Including a GEDSI-specific investment criterion was essential for ensuring that gender equality, disability, and social inclusion considerations were systematically mainstreamed across Katalis activities. It signalled the program's commitment to inclusive trade and provided a consistent entry point for integrating GEDSI into activity design and appraisal processes. However, the absence of specific GEDSI targets or minimum impact thresholds limited the program's ability to drive stronger outcomes.

**Impact:** Without clear expectations for minimum levels of inclusion or quantified GEDSI results, many activities incorporated GEDSI considerations at a surface level but did not necessarily translate into meaningful participation or benefit for women, people with disabilities, or other marginalised groups. Establishing impact floors or targets could have strengthened accountability and encouraged more deliberate action to achieve inclusive trade outcomes.

Targeted activities and partnerships with other DFAT-funded programs were also implemented, aimed at raising awareness of the constraints faced by women engaged in trade and investment. This included co-financing a census on women in executive leadership teams in the IDX 200 in 2023 and co-hosting with the Asian Development Bank and the Ministry of Trade a [forum for women-led SMEs engaged in trade](#) and [market building activities](#) for bilateral trade and investment in the Indonesian and Australian care economies in 2024. Lastly, Katalis collaborated with other DFAT-funded programs to amplify the impact of each other's work. Examples include leveraging market research on assistive technology conducted by Prospera, an Australian-Indonesian Partnership for Economic Development focused on improving the effectiveness of economic institutions and policies, for an [in-depth examination of bilateral trade and investment in assistive technology](#), and [co-hosting disability inclusion events](#) with INKLUSI, the Australia-Indonesia Partnership towards an inclusive society, and their partners. However, given the requirement that activities meet seven investment criteria including commercial viability and alignment with bilateral interests it has been challenging to identify compliant targeted initiatives that substantively address the structural barriers faced by women and other marginalised groups in trade and investment, a limitation of the approach.

Complementing this multi-layered approach, is the way in which GEDSI is integrated into program operations, communications and monitoring and evaluation. As set out in Katalis GEDSI Toolkit, the program is guided by sustainable gender equality and social inclusion principles (Figure 1). The principles have been adapted from

the UN Women Empowerment Principles, developed by the UN Women and UN Global Compact and cover five dimensions: leadership, workplace, marketplace, community and advocacy, and transparency and evidence. One example of these principles in practice is the gender balance on the senior management team.

Leadership	Workplace	Marketplace	Community and Advocacy	Transparency and Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Gender-equal and inclusive corporate leadership (Principle 1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Non-discriminatory, zero tolerance on violence &amp; environmentally friendly (Principle 2)</li> <li>•Health, safety and well-being of workers, particularly those with disabilities (Principle 3)</li> <li>•Affirmative action and capacity building (Principle 4)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices with equality, inclusiveness, non-discrimination, health &amp; safety, zero tolerance on violence and trafficking, and environmentally friendly standards (Principle 5)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Community leadership and engagement through setting examples and leveraging influence (Principle 6)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Transparency, measurement and reporting (Principle 7)</li> </ul>

Figure 1: Five GEDSI Principles

**Insight:** The multi-pronged GEDSI approach provides a strong conceptual framework but lacked the operational tools to address social norms and structural barriers, disproportionately excluding women-led businesses, and limiting the ability to ensure more equitable participation and benefits from IA-CEPA.

**Impact:** Without targeted mechanisms to address gender-specific constraints, such as unequal access to finance, limited networks, care responsibilities, and restrictive social norms, women-led businesses remain underrepresented in IA-CEPA-enabled trade and investment opportunities. As a result, the full potential for inclusive economic benefits under the agreement remains unrealised.

## 2.2.5. Communications

**Katalis's communications support greater access and inclusion through targeted events, products and content.** Katalis also works to support GEDSI outcomes by raising awareness around restrictive social norms around women and people with disability and challenging harmful stereotypes. Examples of this include: targeted communications that highlight the [commercial and development benefits of disability inclusion](#) and highlighting the economic contribution of [paid care work](#) and unpaid care burdens that limit women's full economic participation; and promoting investment opportunities that support women's employment in healthcare, aged care and early childhood education.

These communications and awareness-raising activities have played an important role in offsetting some of the inherent limitations of the program's operating model. By elevating the visibility of inclusion issues within trade and investment conversations, Katalis has helped to sensitise business leaders, government stakeholders and industry groups to the commercial and social value of greater participation by women, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups. Through its targeted events, media outreach, and social media campaigns, Katalis has also provided a platform for women business leaders, many of whom would not typically have such visibility in bilateral trade forums, to share their experiences, showcase their businesses, and contribute to shaping the narrative around inclusive trade and investment. While direct engagement with businesses to influence internal policies has been limited, these communications efforts have helped challenge prevailing norms, build broader constituencies of support for inclusive economic growth, and lay important groundwork for deeper GEDSI integration in future partnerships and phases of the program.

**Insight:** Communications activities have provided important operational flexibility to advance GEDSI objectives within the constraints of the program model. Through targeted events, media products, and social media campaigns, Katalis has raised awareness of gender and disability inclusion, given visibility to women business leaders, and positioned inclusive trade as both a commercial and development priority.

**Impact:** In the absence of the possibility of sustained engagement with businesses to influence internal policies, communications have offered a practical entry point to promote inclusion, challenge restrictive norms, and build constituencies for change. However, achieving deeper and more durable GEDSI outcomes will require complementary measures that directly engage businesses and address structural barriers to participation.

## 2.2.6. Monitoring and evaluation

GEDSI is integrated into the program Theory of Change (ToC), key performance indicators (KPI), and mainstreamed across the monitoring and evaluation system. Data is disaggregated by gender. The Katalis Theory of Change reflects a deliberate and iterative effort to integrate GEDSI across all levels of the program logic.<sup>4</sup> At the highest level, the end-of-program outcomes explicitly commit to inclusive economic growth through trade and investment, framing GEDSI not as a standalone goal but as central to broader development objectives. Mid-level outcomes incorporate inclusion by focusing on equitable skills development, improved access to markets, and enhanced bilateral economic partnerships that benefit traditionally underrepresented groups. These intentions are further operationalised through activities targeting women-led SMEs, inclusive education and training, and initiatives that support people with disabilities and rural communities.

A strength of the ToC (see Annex) is that it mainstreams GEDSI. This approach ensures that all program areas such as market access, skills development, and investment facilitation actively consider the differential impacts on women, people with disabilities, and rural groups

Despite this strength, some limitations remain. The ToC could better articulate how systemic barriers facing women, people with disabilities and rural groups will be addressed at scale. While inclusion is referenced at multiple levels, the causal pathways for how program outputs will translate into sustained, transformative change for GEDSI groups are not always clear. For example, under the market integration pathway, the ToC outlines that activities such as dialogues, forums, awareness-raising, and training particularly in key sectors relevant to GEDSI will lead to increased business and government awareness of the commercial benefits of inclusion. This awareness is expected to drive GEDSI initiatives that contribute to better integrated markets between Indonesia and Australia and enhance labour market skills, thereby boosting productivity, gender

<sup>4</sup> The ToC was revised numerous times and is yet to be approved by both governments.

equality, and social inclusion by 2025. While awareness is an important foundation for shifting attitudes and behaviours, it is rarely sufficient on its own to generate the types of systemic, transformative change needed. Without complementary actions, such as policy reform, targeted investment, capacity-building for implementation, and accountability mechanisms, the link between awareness and sustained change in market behaviour or labour force inclusion for diverse groups remains tenuous. As such, the ToC would benefit from clearer articulation of these enabling conditions and intermediate steps required to bridge the gap between awareness and impact, as well as the underlying assumptions about what must hold true for these changes to occur.

**Katalis has five GEDSI specific KPIs:** covering increased economic opportunities, skills, labour force participation, awareness of the commercial benefits of GESI, and the number of GEDSI initiatives (see box). Together, they provide a comprehensive framework to track inclusion across economic and institutional domains and provide enough flexibility to accommodate Katalis's diverse portfolio of investments and activities.

**However, several limitations remain.** The indicators are broadly defined and lack baselines, or targets, making it difficult to measure progress consistently or attribute changes directly to Katalis interventions. Further, there is a disconnect

between the Katalis operating model, characterised by discrete, catalytic inputs designed to buy down risk, and the longer-term engagement often required for businesses to fully recognise the commercial value of GEDSI and to implement initiatives that foster more inclusive trade and investment.

#### GEDSI KPIs

- Increased economic opportunities
- Increased skills
- Increased labor force participation
- Increased awareness of the commercial benefits of GEDSI
- Increased number of GEDSI initiatives (e.g., workplace policies and practices) support more integrated and inclusive bi-lateral trade and investment.

**Insight:** GEDSI is embedded across the Katalis program logic, with explicit integration into the ToC, dedicated KPIs, and mainstreaming within the monitoring and evaluation system. This reflects a deliberate effort to position inclusion not as a standalone activity but as a core pillar of inclusive trade and investment. The ToC encourages all program components to consider the differential impacts on women, people with disabilities, and rural communities. The five GEDSI-specific KPIs reinforce this by offering a broad framework to monitor progress in economic opportunities, skills, labour force participation, awareness, and inclusive workplace practices.

**Impact:** This integration ensures that GEDSI considerations shape planning and implementation across Katalis's portfolio. However, limitations in the KPIs and ToC such as the absence of clear targets, vague causal pathways, and limited focus on enabling conditions, undermine their effectiveness in driving systemic change. Notably, Katalis's portfolio model, important during its initial years during the COVID-19 global pandemic, was not given time to evolve and better align with the sustained engagement businesses typically need to adopt inclusive practices. To translate GEDSI awareness into action, Katalis will need to complement its current approach with longer-term partnerships, clearer metrics, and support mechanisms that address structural barriers to participation.

## 2.3. Portfolio

Katalis's portfolio of investments spanned a diverse range of sectors including agriculture, advanced manufacturing, care economy, digital services, skills, and tourism. GEDSI is mainstreamed across the portfolio, due to the fact that one of the seven investment criteria was on delivering GEDSI benefits. In 2023 and 2024, program-wide GEDSI stocktaking exercises revealed that all investments were designed to benefit at least one GEDSI group and that women were the GEDSI group most often targeted in investments, followed by rural groups and people with disability (Figure 2). In addition, over half of the investments were designed to benefit more than one GEDSI group. Further, the exercise showed that all investments were designed to impact one or more of the GEDSI-related program KPIs.

### The value of this approach has been recognised

**externally.** According to DFAT GEDSI experts who reviewed Katalis during a GEDSI clinic in 2023:

*"It is particularly pleasing to see the strong integration of GEDSI in a trade facilitation program: KATALIS is showing how it can be done [...] Other DFAT investments – especially trade-related – will have a lot to learn from KATALIS's experience. Suggest DFAT team looks for opportunities for cross-learning, and MEL plan documents the learning process on GEDSI within KATALIS."*

DFAT's GEDSI Capacity Building Mission, October 2023

This feedback and findings are encouraging considering that the initial program design accorded GEDSI a relatively low priority (MTR, 2024). This point is reflected in the absence of specific GEDSI outcomes in the program logic framework. It also reflects the importance of an early decision by program leadership to include GEDSI as one of the seven investment criteria, develop relevant guidance documents for program staff and embed GEDSI considerations into the programs analytical and communications work.

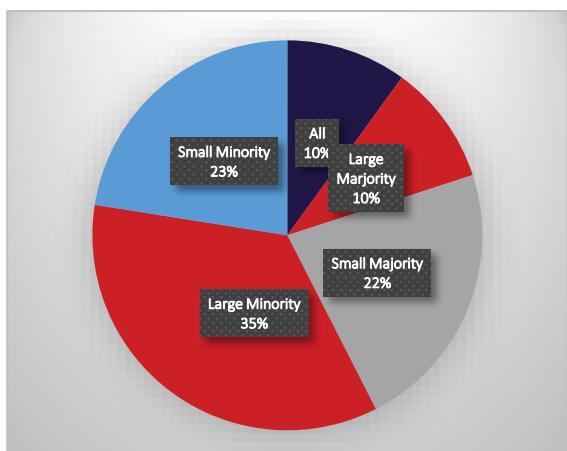


Figure 2: Investment Portfolio by GEDSI Group Beneficiary (S2 2024)

At the same time, there is significant scope to deepen GEDSI impact within Katalis, particularly for women. The 2024 stocktake revealed that while women are the majority beneficiary group (70% of investments benefit women), they are the majority beneficiary group in less than half of the investments (42%) (Figure 3). Meaning that they benefit less from the investment than men. While the program has demonstrated a strong commitment to raising awareness, using its platform to highlight women leaders, promote positive role models, and counter harmful stereotypes through communications and public events, these efforts have not translated into consistent or substantive outcomes across the portfolio. Visibility and dialogue around gender equality and inclusion have improved, particularly through initiatives spotlighting

women's leadership and opportunities in the care economy, but the scale and durability of these benefits remain limited without corresponding structural change.

**Part of this challenge lies in the limited emphasis on GEDSI within business partnerships themselves.** Two of Katalis's five GEDSI KPIs call for businesses to recognise the commercial benefits of inclusion and foster more equitable workplace environments. However, aside from a few exceptions, such as the DAMRI/Deakin University leadership training, these objectives have been largely secondary. In most cases, commercial scale and feasibility have dominated decision-making, leaving GEDSI-related outcomes as supplementary rather than core. This prioritisation has largely been driven by the program's mandate and overarching goals to facilitate large-scale, catalytic trade and investment outcomes rather than by program leadership choices. The emphasis on identifying commercially viable, scalable projects has been critical to Katalis's catalytic trade and investment model, enabling the program to generate significant early wins and demonstrate the economic potential of IA-CEPA. However, this deal-focused approach is inherently less equipped to address the complex, longer-term processes required to shift business practices, challenge restrictive gender norms, or dismantle structural barriers faced by women, people with disabilities and marginalised businesses. Achieving transformative GEDSI outcomes often requires sustained capacity building, policy engagement, targeted support for smaller enterprises, and the cultivation of inclusive business leadership: interventions that typically fall outside the scope and timeframes of commercially-driven partnerships. As a result, while GEDSI has been effectively mainstreamed into program operations, the depth and durability of inclusion outcomes remain contingent on complementary efforts that extend beyond the program's current mandate.

**The absence of explicit GEDSI targets within the Katalis business partnership model has compounded issues.** Although GEDSI is a required investment criterion, there are no minimum thresholds or benchmarks to drive its prioritisation. This creates little incentive for partners or the program itself to centre inclusion in design or delivery. Further, the transaction-focused nature of engagements with business partners limits the program's ability to provide the sustained support, dialogue or technical assistance often needed to influence or strengthen company policies and practices related to gender equality, disability inclusion and broader social inclusion.

**Program stakeholders have not acknowledged the trade-offs involved, particularly when engaging micro and small enterprises or women-led businesses.** These types of businesses often require more intensive support and flexible modalities. In the absence of clear performance expectations and resources to back them, these trade-offs have typically been resolved in favour of commercially-driven priorities, constraining the program's ability to deliver transformative outcomes for underrepresented groups.

## 2.4. GEDSI Groups

The Katalis GEDSI approach has resulted in a portfolio of investments and activities that are designed to positively impact women, people with disability and rural groups. Business partnerships primarily benefit GEDSI groups as consumers (of skills, products and services), as employees and suppliers. The identified GEDSI groups, women, people with disabilities, and rural communities, each face both shared and distinct barriers to participating in and benefiting from trade and investment. These barriers range from limited access to capital, skills, and infrastructure to discriminatory norms and regulatory constraints. Importantly, in the context of trade, these groups occupy different and often overlapping roles as consumers, producers, suppliers, employees, and business owners.

**For women, Katalis explored ways to engage and benefit them across their diverse roles in the trade and investment ecosystem, as workers, entrepreneurs, consumers, and suppliers.** The program was intentional about working in sectors with high female representation, such as health and education, and business partnerships supported by Katalis, such as [Aspen Medical International](#), explicitly considered the extent to which women would benefit as employees or consumers of skills. Alongside efforts to expand economic

opportunities, build skills, and support labour force participation (Katalis KPIs), particular emphasis was placed on recognising and amplifying the role of women-owned SMEs in bilateral trade, given their potential to drive inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

**In contrast Katalis's work on disability inclusion has had a narrower remit:** primarily focused on people with disabilities as consumers with one exception. Communication activities and business partnerships have focused on trade in assistive technologies, accessible tourism, and education. The [Tana Mori project](#), which aimed to support engagement with and ultimately destination management opportunities for people with disabilities in the tourism sector, is an exception to the focus on people with disabilities as consumers.

**Katalis work with rural groups has also been narrower in scope:** primarily focusing on their roles as suppliers and employees. Katalis support to [Indonesia premium cocoa companies to explore the Australian market](#) and support for the development of [learning modules in grain technology](#) and leadership training tailored for Indonesian flour milling staff are two examples.

**A key strength of Katalis's approach lies in its pragmatic and opportunity-driven focus on inclusion, grounded in a holistic recognition of the multifaceted role of GESI groups in the trade ecosystem and alignment with sectors where these groups are already active.** For example, by deliberately targeting industries like health and education, where women are more likely to be employed, and integrating gender considerations into the design of business partnerships, Katalis was able to identify practical entry points for women's economic participation while also demonstrating the commercial benefits of inclusion. Katalis's support to women-owned SMEs further drew attention to the role of women as drivers of trade and investment, contributing to broader goals of inclusive and sustainable growth.

**Similarly, the program focus on assistive technology and accessible tourism for disability inclusion reflected a pragmatic choice:** given limited data on labour participation and business ownership among people with disabilities, these sectors offered immediate, high-potential opportunities for disability inclusion. Tourism is one of the largest traded services sectors with Australia, and Australia's recognised expertise in assistive technology aligned with Indonesia's significant unmet demand. Likewise, engaging rural groups primarily as suppliers and employees in agriculture and food production made sense given their geographic and economic positioning. Together, these efforts reflect a targeted, commercially grounded pathway to inclusion that aligns well with comparative advantage and market demand.

**A notable limitation of this approach is that it often relied on existing patterns of participation rather than addressing the structural barriers that prevent underrepresented groups from accessing higher-growth or less traditional sectors.** For women, while the focus on skills development and employment pathways was important, there was limited sustained engagement with businesses on internal policies and practices, such as leadership development and inclusive workplace policies, which may limit the long-term impact and durability of the inclusion outcomes. Similarly, in the case of people with disabilities and rural groups, focusing on their roles as consumers or employees, constrained the ambition to tackle deeper barriers, such as access to finance, networks, infrastructure, or entrepreneurship pathways. Expanding the program's efforts to address these systemic issues could help unlock more transformative and sustainable inclusion over time.

**Insight:** Katalis identified women, people with disabilities, and rural communities as priority GEDSI groups, recognising that each face both shared and distinct barriers to participating in and benefiting from trade. These groups occupy a range of roles requiring tailored strategies. A key strength of Katalis's approach lies in its pragmatic, opportunity-driven focus, grounded in a strong understanding of these roles and alignment with sectors where GEDSI groups are already active.

**Impact:** This approach enabled Katalis to identify realistic, high-impact opportunities to promote inclusion while advancing its trade and investment goals. However, the program's ambition to address deeper structural barriers was still limited. For women, the focus on employment pathways lacked sustained engagement on internal business policies and practices. For people with disabilities and rural communities, a focus on their roles as consumers (disability) or employees (rural groups) overlooked challenges these groups face as entrepreneurs and for employees like access to finance, networks, and infrastructure. Strengthening future efforts to address these constraints could enhance the program's potential for more transformative, lasting inclusion.

## 2.5. Impact

The inclusion of GEDSI-specific KPIs in Katalis's monitoring and evaluation framework has supported the mainstreaming of gender equality, disability and social inclusion across all aspects of the program. By embedding GEDSI considerations into activity design, implementation and reporting, the KPIs have helped ensure that inclusive outcomes remain present alongside commercial objectives (Figure 4). This structured approach has also provided a clear framework for identifying opportunities, tracking progress, and maintaining program focus on the participation of women, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups in bilateral trade and investment.

**Beyond KPIs, investments are designed to have deeper impacts for women, households and communities.** The stocktaking exercise found that a majority of investments are designed to contribute to aspects of women's economic empowerment and long-term positive impacts such as improved health, social cohesion, environment and well-being (Figure 5).

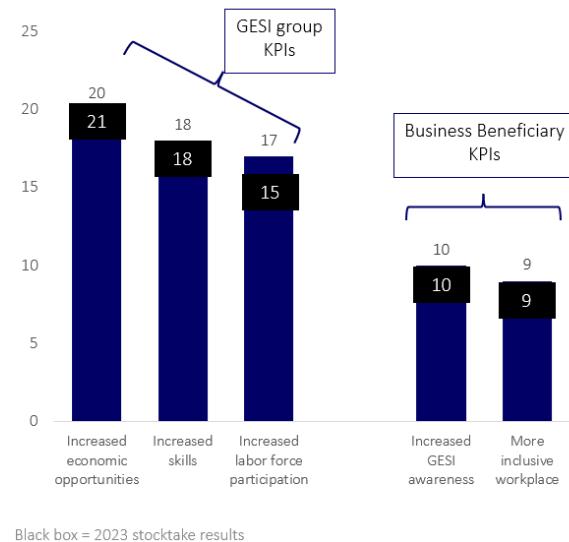


Figure 4: Stocktake Results of Katalis's GEDSI KPIs (S2 2024)

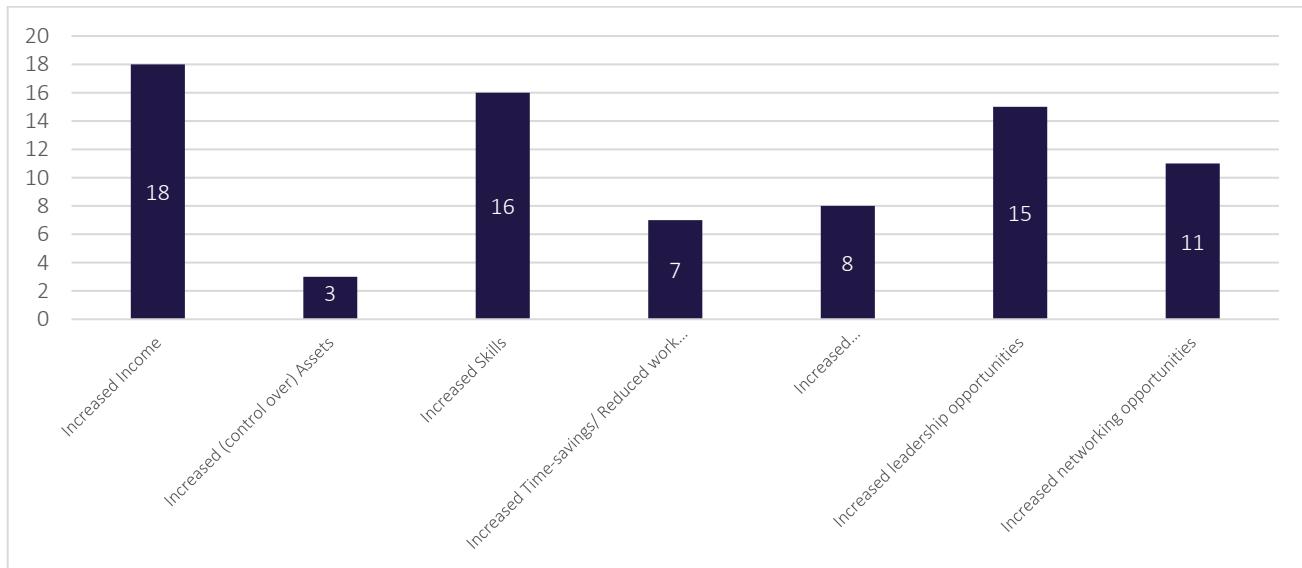


Figure 5: Stocktake Results of Katalis's Contribution to Women's Economic Empowerment (S2 2024)

### 3. Recommendations

*This section provides recommendations for the next phase of Katalis.*

The following recommendations build on the progress Katalis made in mainstreaming GEDSI across its trade and investment activities. While IA-CEPA was not originally designed with a GEDSI lens, Katalis made inclusion a defining feature of its approach: embedding GEDSI into program culture, leadership, investment processes, and market analysis. This commitment was sustained despite a shortened delivery timeframe, curtailed by COVID-19-related delays. Even within this constrained context and taking into consideration the added complexity of intervening in global trade systems, Katalis delivered a portfolio of activities with strong inclusive potential, generating tangible benefits such as increased incomes, skills, and labour force participation for women, people with disabilities, and rural communities.

Looking ahead, the next phase of Katalis must elevate GEDSI from a cross-cutting consideration to a core program objective. To do so, the next phase must move beyond mainstreaming and directly address the structural barriers, such as unequal access to finance, networks, infrastructure, and decision-making power, that continue to inhibit more equitable participation in trade.

#### Program-level Recommendations

##### 1. Develop program-level and breakthrough area/sector-specific GEDSI strategies

The program and each Breakthrough Area should have its own tailored GEDSI strategy that identifies sector-specific barriers and opportunities relevant to women, people with disabilities, and rural communities. These strategies should: (i) Be co-developed with Breakthrough Area teams and representative groups (e.g., DPOs, women's business associations) to ensure local ownership and relevance; (ii) Include diagnostic assessments of participation barriers in each area and sector (as applicable); (iii) Define sector-specific inclusion goals and learning questions; (iv) Inform activity design and selection, MEL frameworks, and ongoing GEDSI integration.

##### 2. Introduce GEDSI impact thresholds in investment criteria and build in more flexibility around the application of the criteria

Revise the GEDSI investment criterion to introduce minimum expectations while allowing for flexibility depending on sectoral context and entry points for influence. Specifically: (i) Aim for at least 60% of endline beneficiaries of any new investment activity to be from GEDSI groups (disaggregated by gender, disability, and

geography), and target 85% of all investments to disproportionately benefit GEDSI groups; (ii) Ensure all investments include measurable efforts to influence business practices, such as inclusive recruitment, gender-responsive workplace policies, or improved physical and digital accessibility; (iii) Require business partners to develop and implement a GEDSI Action Plan (scaled accordingly), outlining how they will advance equity goals, with technical support from Katalis, over the course of the partnership.

### **3. Expand the approach and operational toolbox to address GEDSI and MSE-specific constraints, including norm-shifting measures impeding trade outcomes**

To support more transformative and systemic GEDSI outcomes, Katalis should expand its approach and operational toolbox to address the underlying constraints identified in breakthrough area strategies that limit equitable participation in and benefits from trade for women, people with disabilities, and rural communities. This includes introducing complementary activities that respond to the specific barriers faced by women, people with disabilities, and micro and small enterprises in business partnerships. These efforts should target both structural and normative barriers at the firm and sector levels. Specifically: (i) Introduce flexibility within business partnerships to include targeted medium-term support such as phased grants, technical assistance, and mentorship; (ii) Allocate dedicated resources for sector-level interventions that address underlying constraints such as limited access to finance, poor market information, and restrictive gender or disability norms that hinder equitable participation in IA CEPA-enabled trade and investment. This should include the flexibility to deploy additional tools such as grants, challenge funds, regulatory dialogue, or community engagement platforms where market-based approaches are insufficient. These interventions should also institutionalise norm shifting efforts in sectors where entrenched social norms restrict participation, such as cross border mobility for women or leadership roles in male dominated industries, through initiatives such as awareness campaigns, stakeholder dialogues, strategic communications, and partnerships with organisations of persons with disabilities and women's organisations to co-design outreach and support mechanisms.

### **4. Align MEL and GEDSI tools with systems change goals**

Strengthen the monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) system to better capture progress toward inclusive trade and investment and to support adaptive management. Specifically: (i) Introduce outcome-level GEDSI indicators and targets tailored to each Breakthrough Area strategy, ensuring alignment with sector-specific inclusion objectives and constraints; (ii) Strengthen causal pathways in the Theory of Change to reflect how GEDSI outcomes are expected to emerge, including intermediate outcomes related to participation, business practice change, market access, and norm change; (iii) Set clear program-wide GEDSI targets, such as the percentage increase in GEDSI-led businesses engaged, share of investments adopting inclusive practices, or improved accessibility across supported activities; (iv) Institutionalise regular GEDSI reviews, including learning loops and stakeholder reflection sessions, to assess progress, surface barriers, and adjust programming in real time.

### **5. Continue to strengthen institutional capacity and incentives to deliver on GEDSI**

Enhance Katalis's ability to consistently deliver GEDSI outcomes by investing in internal capacity, performance systems, and targeted support. Specifically: (i) Continue to build internal GEDSI capacity across all teams, including advisers and business partners, through training, coaching, and access to practical guidance; (ii) Incentivise GEDSI leadership and accountability by incorporating GEDSI-related performance indicators into staff and delivery partner KPIs;

### **6. Align budget and human resources with GEDSI ambitions**

Ensure that Katalis's commitment to inclusive trade and investment is adequately resourced, with dedicated funding and staffing to drive implementation at both activity and portfolio levels. Specifically: (i) Allocate a dedicated GEDSI budget line across all Breakthrough Areas to support targeted interventions, technical assistance, and inclusive innovation (e.g., accessible technologies, norm-shifting initiatives); (ii) Ensure that human resource planning includes specialist GEDSI expertise, both within the core team and across partnerships, to guide inclusive activity design and delivery; (iii) Require GEDSI budgeting in all activity proposals, with guidance on how resources will be used to address participation barriers, improve inclusion,

and enable systemic change; (iv) Embed a gender/disability-sensitive procurement process and budget target to actively identify, engage, and support women-led businesses and businesses owned by a person with disabilities, and to ensure procurement decisions consider gender, accessibility, and inclusion outcomes alongside value for money.

## Conclusion

Katalis's first phase demonstrates that it is both possible and necessary to integrate gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) into trade and investment programming, even when operating within commercially focused models and under significant delivery constraints. By embedding GEDSI across leadership, systems, and technical workstreams, Katalis made important progress in identifying inclusive opportunities, engaging underrepresented groups, and generating tangible benefits for women, people with disabilities, and rural communities. While gaps remain, particularly in addressing structural barriers, sustaining business engagement, and aligning investment criteria with inclusive outcomes, the program's experience offers valuable lessons for designing more equitable trade initiatives.

Looking ahead, deepening GEDSI impact will require a more intentional, strategic approach: one that moves beyond integration toward transformation. This includes strengthening operational tools, setting clearer inclusion targets, and enabling long-term engagement with partners who can influence business practices, policy settings, and market structures. Katalis is well-positioned to build on its early momentum and play a leadership role in shaping a more inclusive bilateral trade agenda under IA-CEPA. In doing so, it can help set new standards for how trade and development programs contribute not only to economic growth, but to inclusive, sustainable, and equitable outcomes.

Annex 1

Katalis's Theory of Change

