



HEADLINE INFORMATION

- **Commodity** - Tea
- **Region & Country** - Asia; Indonesia
- **Pathway** - Accelerate
- **Theme** - Gender Equality & Social Inclusion
- **Secondary theme** - Fair value distribution
- **Consortium lead** - Business Watch Indonesia
- **Partners** - Solidaridad Asia, Paguyuban Tani Lestari

Teh nDeso:

Advancing women's livelihoods through their role as tea micro-entrepreneurs

Women play a crucial role in the Indonesian tea sector, yet they often face low wages and minimal recognition for their work. The Teh nDeso initiative changes this by supporting rural women as micro-entrepreneurs, and raising the profile of smallholder tea producers.

Women are the heartbeat of the tea harvest. Their work directly affects the quality of the final product, yet they earn little. Beyond the fields, they juggle household duties and childcare.

At the same time, smallholders struggle selling their tea through middlemen, which significantly cuts into earnings. This reliance leaves them vulnerable to unfair pricing, and the lack of transparency in these transactions deepens their economic disadvantage.

The producer organization Paguyuban Tani Lestari, which represents over 40,000 smallholders, has worked since 2016 to help their members improve farming practices, and collectively market their tea. The support of Solidaridad and Business Watch Indonesia under the RECLAIM Sustainability! programme has strengthened the position of the organization in establishing the Teh nDeso brand, owned by Paguyuban Tani Lestari.

It facilitated the participation of tea smallholders in multi-stakeholder forums and assisted them in developing their networks in the supply chain, government and business. Furthermore, the Teh nDeso campaign on smallholder tea products has led to strengthening the presence of tea smallholders in the supply chain and gaining

support from consumers. The brand brings high-quality tea directly to consumers, generates employment opportunities for women, and reflects a commitment to inclusive growth and sustainable livelihoods.

The Teh nDeso business model elevates visibility and market access for smallholders, while creating entrepreneurial opportunities for rural women.

In the model, women receive training as local tea micro-entrepreneurs (*micropreneurs*) selling packaged smallholder tea directly to neighbors and nearby markets. Unlike formal factory jobs, Teh nDeso allows women to work at their own pace and schedule, balancing tea-related work with family duties.



“People now respect me differently. I am no longer seen as a mere farm worker. ... I can now afford and ensure a decent education for my children.”

Watini, a farmer and mother

The initiative strengthens the position of smallholders in the market and helps women to achieve tangible personal gains, both economic and social. Direct selling increases income, and as their role becomes more visible, they gain respect in their communities and families. They're no longer seen as laborers but as entrepreneurs who contribute to the local economy.

Watini, a farmer and mother, increased her monthly income by nearly 30 euros after joining the initiative. The extra earnings help her cover household expenses and repay debt.

Some impact numbers

- Since 2022, smallholder tea sales have grown from 10 metric tonnes per year to over 180 metric tonnes.
- Farmer incomes have risen by 15-25%.
- Over 900 women and smallholders are selling tea products in their neighborhoods and in local shops.

What's next?

The Teh nDeso initiative exemplifies a commodity-driven approach to rural empowerment, rooted in community ownership and inclusive participation. The model has the potential to reach over 40,000 smallholder tea producers through Paguyuban Tani Lestari's network.

Although domestic demand for smallholder tea is growing, broader distribution remains limited and needs strategic investment in retail access, digital



marketing, and policy engagement to increase reach and impact.

Whilst the brand is already on the market, it remains important to support the growth of this model. Some important points include developing modern management systems related to knowledge transfer among women micro-entrepreneurs, as well as increasing their number and fostering their skills and knowledge as micro-entrepreneurs. With targeted support, the business model could become a practical solution for inclusive growth with the potential to extend to other sectors, such as coffee, cocoa, and spices.

Learn more online

- [Teh nDeso connects tea farmers in Indonesia, Solidaridad Network](#)
- [Teh nDeso website](#)
- 'Brewing Change with Teh nDeso'. The Teh nDeso story in the Partos publication: [“The Power of Partnerships: 27 Stories of Civil Society Driving Change”](#)