Dorcas
Building reliable value chains

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Dorcas value chain model

Market identification → Buyer and demand analysis → Barrier and inclusion mapping → Producer organisation → Hub and quality system development → Market linkage → Reliability monitoring → Exit strategy

Value chains in Eastern Africa

The five value chains evaluated

Value chain	Country	Area
Honey	Tanzania	Chemba
Honey	Kenya	Kitui
Pasture and milk	Kenya	Makueni
Camel milk	Ethiopia	Moyale
Chicken	Kenya	Siaya

The core lesson

Sustainable value chains depend more on reliability than training. Where payments arrived on time, quality systems were enforced consistently, governance was trusted, and buyers were secured before production was scaled. The outcome was producers who thrived. Where any of these systems faltered, even briefly, any gains made eroded quickly.

The eight vital elements of successful value chains

- Routines that stick
- A credible hub
- Quality enforced and coached
- Predictable transactions
- A working support ecosystem
- Inclusion by design
- Resilience built in
- Market pull you can serve

Market-first matters

Production-first chain

Training
↓
Production increase
↓
No buyer
↓
Oversupply
↓
Price collapse
↓
Exit

Market-first chain

Buyer identified
↓
Standards agreed
↓
Payment system established
↓
Production expansion
↓
Growth

What keeps producers in cooperatives?

✓ Reliable payment	✓ Access to training
✓ Predictable buyer	✓ Better prices
✓ Fair quality grading	✓ Social support

What is your role?

NGO practitioners: Design from the market backwards, build baselines from day one, and treat payment reliability as a non-negotiable.

Institutional donors: Check the value chain is market-first, the governance functional, and the chain will be sustainable after NGO support ends.

Investors and CSR partners: A multi-cycle investment pathway is realistic; expecting self-sufficiency within a single grant cycle is not.

Inclusion specialists: Inclusion by design outperforms inclusion by intent. Payment architecture, adaptation of roles, and governance rules determine who benefits.

Do you work on value chain challenges or invest in value chain impact? We would like to get in touch with you to share experiences and explore opportunities together. Contact us at learning@dorcas.nl or partnerships@dorcas.org