



Acumen Gender Sensitivity Policy

Last updated November 30, 2015

“It starts by standing with the poor, listening to voices unheard, and recognizing potential where others see despair. It demands investing as a means, not an end, daring to go where markets have failed and aid has fallen short.... It thrives on moral imagination: the humility to see the world as it is, and the audacity to imagine the world as it could be....It’s the radical idea of creating hope in a cynical world. Changing the way the world tackles poverty and building a world based on dignity.” – Acumen Manifesto

Background

Our mission is closely tied to listening to the voices in the communities where we work, stimulating entrepreneurial solutions to poverty and reducing individual vulnerability and inequality through economic inclusion. We want to consider if a gender sensitive lens to our work could help us to be more effective in our mission and in serving impoverished communities. With this policy, we intend to pilot how we might measure the impact of our work on women, to understand if we can better listen to the voices *of women* in the communities where we work, stimulate entrepreneurial *and gender sensitive* solutions to poverty and reduce individual vulnerability and inequality *based on gender* through economic inclusion. We believe that we will have collaborators with whom we can test and learn on this evolving topic, and who will help us to pivot efficiently if our strategies should be improved.

A few terms that we use in this policy:

Gender equality means that the rights and opportunities of men and women are not limited by virtue of being born a certain gender.

Gender sensitivity considers contributions of and impacts to individuals across genders, and the strategies to promote gender equality.

There are various *strategies to promote gender equality*, which may range from tracking the gender of beneficiaries to assessing gender impact in decision-making to identifying gender bias to expanding opportunities.

Commitments

This policy is Acumen’s first attempt at taking an intentional approach to gender sensitivity in our programs and operations. We intend to take a staged approach - first, measuring what we feasibly can measure in our programs and operations; second, reviewing the data collected at meaningful intervals and determining what we’ve learned; and third, based on those lessons, determining any advisable changes to our approach. We expect to iterate on this approach, with a little help from our friends, and expect that our strategies will change as our thinking evolves.

Ambition

Our expectation is that a gender sensitive lens will improve the effectiveness of our programs and operations over the longer term. In the near term, we believe that this policy will result in:

- Internalization of senior management commitment to gender sensitivity
- Norms within each office for implementing our programs and interacting with our team
- Metrics that we craft and collect from or on behalf of our programs regarding their gender impact
- Clearer communications around our impact on gender equality
- Transparency and credibility when working with third parties who undertake gender assessments in their work

Implementation

We intend to implement this policy by developing and implementing action plans for our programs, governance and human resources. Preliminary action plans are attached as *Annexes 1* through *3*. Additional operational guidance and monitoring will be provided periodically by the COO, GC, Head of Talent, Country Directors and heads of Acumen’s programs in investing, leadership and impact. We encourage our staff to think about and suggest strategies to reduce

inequality, which may include strategies that promote gender equality, as they have insights through our work generally and via implementation of this policy.

Review

The Chief Operating Officer will oversee implementation of the action plans effecting this policy. The heads of each program, the General Counsel (with respect to governance) and the Head of Talent in coordination with Country Directors (with respect to human resources) will report annually to the COO regarding their respective action plans. An annual summary report will be submitted to the board of directors of Acumen. We encourage the COO to revisit this policy in three years, to reflect on lessons during implementation and operationalization, and to assess the value obtained from the adoption of this policy.

Annex 1

Action Plans - Programs

Investing:

We believe that we can best implement strategies by selecting a subset of our investments for rollout, and then phasing in strategies across additional subsets after evaluating success of rollout, appropriateness of metrics, ability to collect metrics, lessons from data collected and available resources. For purposes of this action plan, we will prioritize new investments, sourced with investment capital, in the energy sector, specifically the subsectors of solar home systems, lanterns and mini-grid operators (“Priority Investments”).

For the Priority Investments, we will develop the following strategies commencing in 2016:

- Develop gender impact assessment in Theory of Change discussions in Investment Memorandum (in consultation with Acumen’s Impact team)
- Collect regular estimates reported by or collected on behalf of portfolio companies for gender impact. To include number of women impacted, based on customized indicators for each investment, such as tracking:
 - o Founders/senior management
 - o Employees
 - o Consumers
 - o Technicians
 - o Association members
 - o Borrowers
 - o Students
- Highlight estimated number of investments that indicate positive outcomes for women

In additional, for one region (Latin America), we will develop a strategy document to understand gender equality in accessing financial services, and a work plan to estimate the gender impact of our investments.

Commencing in 2017, we will review the Investment Memoranda and estimates, and determine if any modifications are advisable to our strategies. If so, we will implement those modifications for Priority Investments. Possible modifications may result from identifying, and assessing methods to obtain, priority data sets for the Priority Investments.

We will develop the following strategies commencing in 2018:

- Determine what aspects of the pilot on Priority Investments was useful
- To the extent the pilot demonstrated useful strategies, develop a plan to include gender impact assessment and to collect metrics for non-Priority Investments (i.e., existing investments, sourced with philanthropic capital and/or in additional sectors and/or subsectors), which may be phased as further priority areas are identified (in consultation with the Impact team)
- Consider the lessons from the data and if it might inform strategies to promote gender equality in the context of our investment decisions and management, to the extent operationally advisable and feasible.

Leadership:

We will adopt the following strategies commencing in 2016:

- Report for our fellows programs, currently and historically:
 - o Number of women fellows
 - o Number of regional fellows' social change projects that have an explicit gender impact focus
 - o Consider plausibility of supporting fellows to track customized indicators for each such project
- Incorporate questions in +Acumen surveys to determine gender of participants
- Consider method of tracking which courses have a gender sensitive or targeted approach, and/or develop a +Acumen course with a gender equality component

We will adopt the following strategies commencing in 2017:

- Highlight number of courses that have positive data for impact on women
- Identify gender equality implications of the applications for our fellows programs, and the curriculum for such programs
- Add leadership development programming to fellows curriculum that highlights social change projects that indicate positive outcomes for women

Annex 2

Action Plan – Governance

We will implement the following strategies by the end of 2015:

- Obtain board approval for gender sensitivity policy
- Post the policy publicly (such as a link from our website)

We will implement the following strategy commencing in 2016:

- Monitor development of action plans underlying the gender sensitivity policy

We will provide adequate resources to implement the following strategy for the duration of the policy:

- Monitor compliance with the “Review” provisions of the policy

Annex 3

Action Plan – Human Resources

We will implement the following strategies commencing in 2016:

- Track gender composition of staff, with breakdowns in each category of seniority and in each office
- Revisit and restate commitment to opposition to discrimination based on gender, as well as other categories

We will implement the following strategies commencing in 2017:

- Identify areas of gender disparity
- Assess if gender disparity compromises gender equality. If so, develop strategies for gender equality