How We Seek to Advance Gender Equality and Women’s Leadership

We believe that effective systems change requires a resolute focus on gender equality and inclusion – and needs to explicitly address discrimination against girls and women and barriers they face to exercising voice, setting agendas and making choices. These include in the problem analysis, program design, outcomes definition, measurement, and women’s leadership. It also requires support for strengthening organizational capabilities to effectively design and promote gender savvy programs. Accordingly, we expect and support our program partners to grapple with gender as follows:

01. **Problem Analysis:** Because discrimination against and exclusion of women is a major and systemic driver of underdevelopment, we seek to understand the specific gender manifestations of the problem, as well as the gender dimensions of why the problem exists and persists. This includes who gets to define agendas, determine priorities, set norms and enforce actions. Where gendered systems intersect with other forms of discrimination – such as race, ethnicity and class – we will support our partners to address how these social elements compound to curtail opportunity.

02. **Program Design:** Consequently, to succeed, we expect that any response to the problem will address and correct for the root causes of gender discrimination, in substantive and meaningful ways. Gender aspects need to be explicitly addressed in the design of the systems change initiative, including questions of voice, power, agency, representation and accountability.

03. **Outcomes Definition:** Co-Impact seeks to simultaneously advance three types of outcomes: people-level, systems-level, and organizational-level. For each of these, we support partners to articulate and disaggregate outcomes by sex, as well as reflect gender analysis in the choice of outcomes.

04. **Measurement:** Because what is measured is what counts, we work with partners to construct, collect, and analyze measures of progress in relation to gendered outcomes and dynamics, as well as women’s leadership. We support partners to interpret and use this data to adapt and improve program design, practice and decision-making. Our commitment also includes nascent efforts to integrate constituency feedback in systematic, ongoing and meaningful ways, so that both women and men meant to benefit from the initiative are listened to and able to exert influence.

05. **Leadership:** Patriarchal norms and structures are serious constraints to the effectiveness and fairness of global development. We therefore pay close attention to participation and leadership of women at all levels, in initiatives, organizations and partnerships, and particularly in relation to senior management teams and governance boards. We also emphasize women’s representation in the choice of experts we consult, public meetings we convene, and how we communicate our work.

06. **Organizational Strengthening:** Each of our systems change grants includes a substantive amount (typically US $500,000) to support our partners to strengthen critical capabilities and attain strategic coherence. In most cases, gender aspects highlighted above – particularly program design and leadership – will be core elements of organizational strengthening over five years of the grant.

07. **Selection Process:** Gender is strongly called out in our Open Calls process, including the criteria we use for assessment. Our review and selection process places significant weight on how gender is addressed and on women’s representation in decision-making. In our upcoming (third) round of grant-making we will ensure that at least 50% of the initiatives we select are led by women (defined as where the CEO and a substantial proportion of the senior leadership of the partner organization are women). The sex composition of the organization’s board will also be considered.