



In 2011, New York-based Acumen Fund celebrated a decade long experiment in 21st century charitable giving. Conceived with seed capital from the Rockefeller Foundation, Cisco Systems Foundation and three individual philanthropists, the organization was “at last count” responsible for a diverse portfolio of over \$81 million worth of approved investments in 72 countries worldwide. Firmly committed to a belief that social enterprises, emerging leaders and breakthrough ideas hold the key to successfully tackling the challenge of global poverty, Acumen Fund focuses on transformative loan or equity-based investments, recycling returns to feed a growing pool of “patient” capital. Partnering in projects estimated to have benefited over 86 million people to date, the key to Acumen Fund’s pioneering philosophy is its application of venture capital principles in the pursuit of social value, albeit with a higher tolerance for risk and longer time horizons than its for-profit brethren. The result is an innovative “and successful” market-based challenge to traditional modes of grant-driven development and philanthropy.

To complement its angel investor role, the organization has also continued to expand its Global Fellows Program, building a networked “corps of leaders with financial skills, operational know-how, and moral imagination.” The greatest testament to Acumen Fund’s influence is the trail of imitators that have sprung up in its wake “more than 200 impact investment organizations now operate worldwide, focused on driving social change by supporting developing world entrepreneurship. With its sustainability assured, and its “patient” approach demonstrating deepening impact as portfolio enterprises reach maturity, Acumen Fund looks poised to continue to redefine the possibilities of international development as it moves into its second decade. (Presented by <http://theglobaljournal.net/group/top-100-ngos/>)

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