



**BOLD  
THINKERS  
DRIVING  
REAL-WORLD  
IMPACT**

## Gender Equality & Social Inclusion

Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) are urgent goals, both on their own and as cross-cutting aims that are critical to other sectors, including sustainable health, economic growth, agriculture, education, energy, and climate resilience, adaptation, and mitigation. Abt Associates places gender inclusivity and equality at the center of our work, rigorously identifying how social behavior around gender and other identities—such as age, ability, and race—impact activities and outcomes. **Our goal is to advance gender equality, women’s empowerment, and social inclusion, while promoting health and economic well-being for all.**

### Our Approach

Gender is a complex concept, defined through many viewpoints at economic, political, and social/cultural levels. Gender includes how a person is identified (or self-identifies) as a girl, boy, woman, man, non-binary person, or another gender identity, and the expectations—and treatment they receive—at individual, family, community, and organizational levels. Gender also intersects with other identities—such as class, age, sexual orientation, ability, race, and ethnicity—all of which often affect marginalization or vulnerability resulting from social, economic, and political behaviors. Social inclusion is the process of improving the way individuals and groups, especially those who are disadvantaged, can participate in society by improving their access to resources and opportunities, giving them a voice, and respecting their rights. Abt conducts our GESI work through a transparent and supportive approach that centers the experiences, values, and needs of populations with multiple vulnerabilities.



### Our Capabilities

#### CENTERING GENDER IN MULTILAYERED RESILIENCE PROGRAMMING

The **Uganda Integrated Community Agriculture and Nutrition (ICAN) Activity**—the country’s flagship USAID resilience program implemented by Abt—is increasing economic opportunities for poor households, improving nutrition for women and children, and strengthening community and local governance. Together with local partners, Abt carries out a wide range of resilience activities in some of Uganda’s most vulnerable regions. For example, mentor-led camps for out-of-school adolescent girls and young women strengthen their social capital and ability to advocate for their rights. The Activity’s promotion of dietary diversity and nutrient-rich foods improves the nutritional status of families, and the promotion of on- and off-farm businesses increases incomes and helps lift families out of poverty.

## PROMOTING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP IN HEALTH INITIATIVES

Under the USAID-funded President's **Malaria Initiative (PMI) VectorLink Project**, Abt protects millions of people in 24 countries across Africa from malaria, particularly those most vulnerable to the disease, like pregnant women and children. The project promotes gender equality by identifying barriers to women's participation in indoor residual spraying (IRS) and implementing policies to overcome these barriers. Abt carefully designs operational sites to accommodate male and female employees, including separate bathrooms and changing areas for both, and the distribution of menstrual hygiene products in some countries. In addition, the project works with the National Malaria Control Program in each country to recruit and hire more women, ensuring a sustainable approach to gender-integrated IRS after the project ends. The project's approaches have led to the hiring of more women and a dramatic increase in the number of women in supervisory roles, all while meeting or exceeding the project's IRS targets.

## PROMOTING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

In the **Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Myanmar**, Abt works with the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) on the **Investing in Women** program to improve women's economic participation, build markets, and influence the private and public sector to promote their economic empowerment. The program accomplishes this by establishing and supporting business coalitions that promote gender equality in the workplace; working with impact investors to boost investment in women's small and medium businesses; partnering with governments on economic regulatory reform with a gender lens; and advocating for women's economic empowerment. The program also engages governments to promote equality through policymaking and campaigns that challenge bias, stereotypes, and attitudes that hold both men and women back. Through collaboration with corporations and business leaders, impact investors, governments, and advocates, Investing in Women is building momentum for women's economic equality in Southeast Asia.

## ADDRESSING SOCIO-CULTURAL BARRIERS THROUGH MALE ENGAGEMENT AND AWARENESS RAISING

Gender-related factors also create barriers to men accessing and practicing healthy behaviors. Under USAID's **Jordan Communication, Advocacy and Policy Activity**, Abt engages men to share power and improve health outcomes for all. The Activity tackled long-standing sociocultural barriers that influence fertility choices and adoption of family planning by engaging men and youth as clients, partners, family members, and change advocates. Interventions integrated this engagement and women's empowerment into family planning education for vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian refugees in host communities. Abt organized a household community outreach program using door-to-door counseling visits, reaching over 530,000 married women of reproductive age, of whom 17.3 percent accepted a modern family planning method. Family planning champions in government and in communities worked with youth and other vulnerable groups to expand awareness of and demand for family planning services.





## PROMOTING WOMEN AND GIRLS' WELL-BEING AND GBV PREVENTION

Under the Australian DFAT-funded **Australia Timor-Leste Partnership for Human Development**, Abt works in partnership with the government of **Timor-Leste** to support its ownership of quality, equitable, and people-centered services in primary healthcare, basic education, nutrition, and social protection. The program promotes women and girls' access to appropriate services, including improving the quality and availability of family planning services, supporting the roll-out of the Bolsa da Mãe-Jerasaun Foun social protection scheme for mothers and their young children, promoting women's leadership, and ending violence against women and girls.

## FACILITATING DISABILITY INCLUSION

In **Papua New Guinea (PNG)**, Abt, through the Australian government-funded **Kokoda Initiative**, is improving the quality of life for people living along the iconic Kokoda Track, PNG's most popular tourist destination. This remote and difficult terrain attracts thousands of trekkers each year but also makes service delivery to local communities very challenging. The Kokoda Initiative supports people in local villages who can face multiday walks to access healthcare, and where those with disabilities are often completely unable to access either basic health care or specialized services. Abt partners with PNG's largest provider of services to children and adults with disabilities to conduct disability assessments. Over 6,000 people have been assessed and received on-the-spot treatment and/or referrals, while training for health workers and village volunteers creates an ongoing system of identification and referrals. Abt is also supporting schoolteachers with training in inclusive education to improve accessibility and inclusion of children with disabilities.



## MAINSTREAMING GENDER AND INCLUSION IN ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

In **Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam**, under the USAID-funded **Clean Power Asia Program**, Abt promoted the integration of gender equality concerns as we encouraged power sector investments in grid-connected renewable energy (RE) sources. Abt prepared recommendations to increase engagement of and participation by women and other marginalized populations across all segments of the RE value chain. Abt also developed several tools and approaches to increase inclusive participation. These included:

- A Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Checklist, which outlined interventions to address systemic gender issues in the power sector;
- A road map for gender-sensitive design in program activities (including interventions to ensure inclusive stakeholder engagement in energy-related planning, policy, and decision-making processes); and
- Establishing networks of prominent women for information and equitable benefits-sharing.



## INTEGRATING GENDER IN CLIMATE POLICY AND PLANNING

Under the **Pre-Accreditation Support to the Georgia Energy Development Fund Project (GEDF)**, Abt helped the **Republic of Georgia** develop a gender policy and action plan to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment within GEDF and through Georgia's National Climate Change Policy. Following a review of current practices and procedures, Abt prepared recommendations for how GEDF could practically promote equity, inclusivity, and diversity, including:

- Developing partnerships with women-led organizations and investment groups; incorporating inclusive hiring/HR practices
- Working closely with female community leaders and marginalized populations in project consultations
- Encouraging investors to consider gender, biodiversity, and accessibility when conceptualizing new projects. GEDF adopted the new policy and hired a gender specialist who designed and delivered targeted training with their executive team.

## MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN GOVERNANCE

With the support of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO) and the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, Abt established a **Technical Assistance Facility Managed Good Governance Fund (GGF)** for the governments of **Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, and Moldova**. GESI principles are mainstreamed throughout the GGF's operations, aligning closely with FCDO's GESI standards. The GGF reviews determinants like gender inequality, social privilege, and power—including disability status, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender identity—and how these identities intersect. GGF's nuanced approach to reaching vulnerable members of society and clear approach in operations ensures leadership, team member, and partner diversity, and respectful and safe workplace practices. All in-country posts have a Gender Focal Point who supports needs assessments and the integration of GESI into programming. Inclusion is measured throughout project implementation using GESI parameters in monitoring, evaluation, and learning indicators at all levels of the results chain and the risk register. Most recently, GGF supported projects to assist SMEs led by women and persons with disabilities in Ukraine and is undertaking a gender and disability analysis of war reparations policy.

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### **Pursuing Equity. Looking for the Intersections. Driving Real-World Impact.**

Abt Associates is a global consulting and research firm that combines data and bold thinking to improve the quality of people's lives. We partner with clients and communities to advance equity and innovation—from creating scalable digital solutions and combating infectious disease, to mitigating climate change and advancing economic growth.

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