



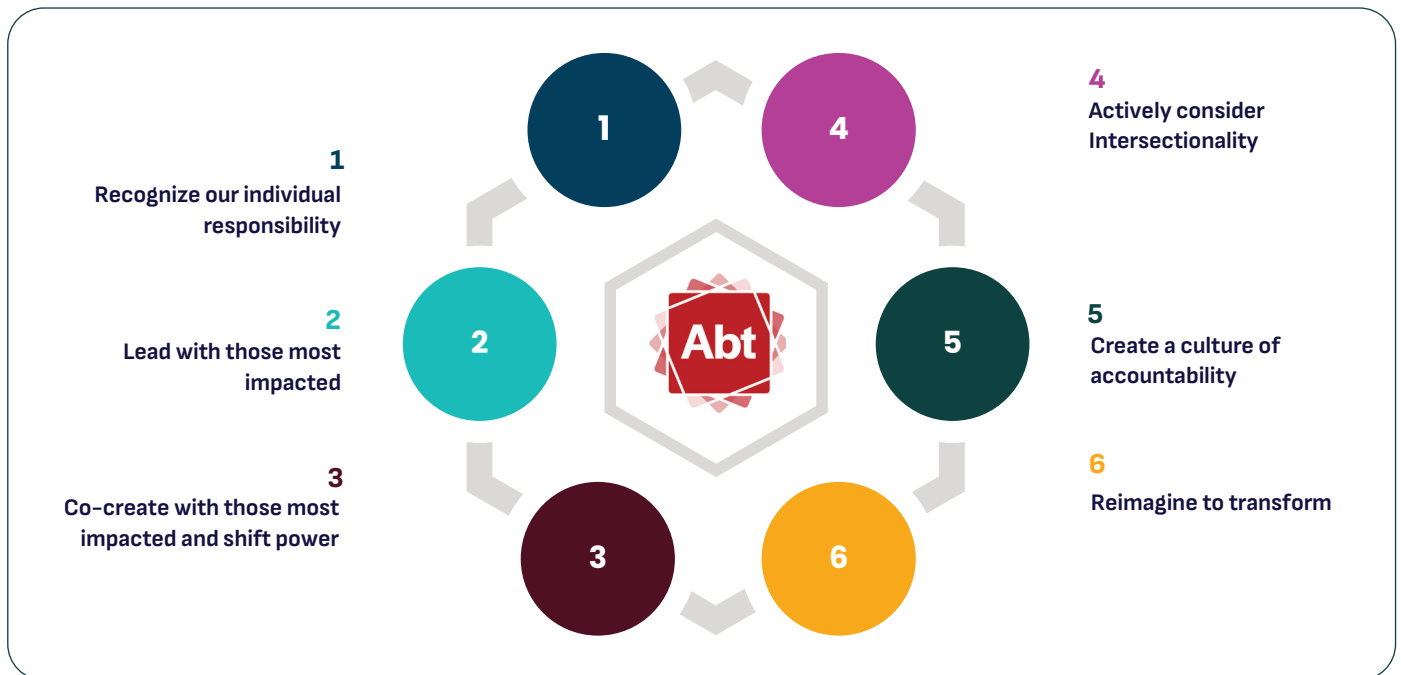
# Gender Equality, Disability Equity, and Social Inclusion



Gender equality, disability equity, and social inclusion (GEDSI) are urgent goals both on their own and as cross-cutting themes critical to achieving sustainable impacts in health, economic development, agriculture, education, energy, and climate programming. Abt Global places GEDSI at the center of our work, rigorously identifying how social behavior around gender, ability, and other identities—such as age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and class—impact programmatic activities and desired outcomes. **Our goal is to advance GEDSI to promote health and economic well-being for all.**

## Our Approach

Personal and group identities play an important role in shaping well-being, agency, and development outcomes. They are complex and often defined through many viewpoints at economic, political, and social/cultural levels. Abt conducts our GEDSI work through a transparent and supportive approach that centers the experiences, values, and needs of the people we serve and considers their multiple vulnerabilities.



We are guided by a GEDSI framework with six core principles:

1. While it is critical to embed GEDSI/equity tools and methodologies in our research, technical assistance, and evaluation work, we cannot do this effectively without self-examination to better understand historic and current inequities and to recognize the ways in which international development perpetuates inequalities.
2. We work with those most impacted by racism, ableism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination and marginalization.
3. We co-design, co-implement, co-measure, and co-evaluate with those most impacted, and prioritize leadership by team members who are representative of those most affected by injustice and inequity.

4. We use an intersectional lens to understand how people's social, cultural, and political identities might combine to create discrimination and exclusion and use this to inform programming.
5. We focus on the impact of our work, ensure it is not unintentionally perpetuating harm, and emphasize the importance of achieving sustainable outcomes.
6. We focus on transforming policies, processes, and systems that perpetuate racism, sexism, ableism, transphobia, homophobia, and oppression.

## Our Capabilities

We partner with national and local governments, civil society, the private sector, and communities to improve policies, laws, and practices, raise awareness about issues affecting disadvantaged groups, and advance transformative change in the communities where we work. Our work covers:

- institutional strengthening;
- program design, monitoring, and evaluation;
- learning and capacity strengthening; and
- policy analysis and reform

## Our Projects

### PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

In the **Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Myanmar**, Abt is working with the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to implement the **Investing in Women** program, which strengthens women's economic participation and influences the private and public sectors to promote women's economic empowerment. The program does this by supporting business coalitions (established during the program's first phase) that promote gender equality in the workplace, working with impact investors to boost investment in women's small and medium enterprises (SMEs), 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 implements communication campaigns that challenge bias, stereotypes, and attitudes that hold both men and women back. Through collaboration with corporations, business leaders, impact investors, governments, and advocates, Investing in Women continues to build momentum for women's economic equality in Southeast Asia.

### FOSTERING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

The DFAT-funded **Papua New Guinea Women Lead Program** (PNGWL) continues Australia's long-term support for gender equality initiatives in Papua New Guinea (PNG). The program's goal is for PNG women and girls, in all their diversity, to be safe and equitably share in resources, opportunities, and decision-making with men and boys. The program has four core areas of work: elevating the voice and agency of women (including women with disabilities) by working to expand the network of

advocates (including men) supporting the women's movement; strengthening gender-based violence (GBV) prevention in PNG by implementing targeted approaches and strategies with civil society that promote respectful and safe ways of relating between women and men; facilitating continued funding for GBV response by working with partners to expand safe, effective, and coordinated GBV case management services; and seeking to bolster women's financial decision-making power and employment opportunities by partnering with civil society and the private sector to support women at work, and delivering activities that seek to enable power-sharing between women and men.



Under the **USAID Mongolia Energy Governance (MEG) Activity**, Abt partners with key government and energy sector stakeholders to increase market competitiveness, incentivize private investment, and support the adoption of modern clean energy technologies. Women working in the male-dominated energy sector described a key need for leadership training, as well as mentorship, networking, and technical training opportunities. In response, MEG designed the Energy Sector Women's Leadership Initiative (ESWLI) to enhance the leadership skills of junior and mid-level women working in the sector. Training topics include energy sector careers and skills, business communication presentation and public speaking, conflict management and negotiation, supervision and coaching, leading with emotional intelligence, work-life integration, personal branding, being politically savvy, and career development and action planning.

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

Under the USAID-funded **President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) VectorLink Project**, Abt helped protect millions of people across 24 countries from malaria, particularly those most vulnerable to the disease, such as pregnant women and children. The project promoted gender equality by identifying barriers to women's participation in indoor residual spraying (IRS) and implementing policies to overcome these barriers. Abt carefully designed operational sites to accommodate male and female employees, including separate bathrooms and changing areas for men and women, and the distribution of menstrual hygiene products in some countries. In addition, the project worked 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 ended. VectorLink's approaches led to more women being hired and a dramatic increase in the number of women in supervisory roles, all while meeting or exceeding the project's IRS targets.

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

Gender-related factors create barriers that hinder men's ability to access and practice healthy behaviors. Under USAID's **Jordan Communication, Advocacy and Policy Activity (JCAP)**, Abt tackled long-standing sociocultural barriers that influence fertility choices and the use of family planning by engaging men as clients, partners, family members, and change advocates. JCAP emphasized the importance of integrating women's empowerment with activities focused on engaging men and youth, and with 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 adopted a modern family planning method. Family planning champions at government and community levels worked with youth and other vulnerable groups to expand awareness of and demand for family planning services.

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

Under the **Australian DFAT-funded Australia Timor-Leste Partnership for Human Development (PHD)**, Abt partners with the Government of **Timor-Leste** to support government ownership of quality, equitable, and people-centered services in primary healthcare, basic education, and social protection. The program promotes women's 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 cash transfer program for mothers and their young children, promoting women's leadership, and ending violence against women and girls. PHD has also been helping the Timor-Leste Ministry of Health improve maternal and child health access and GBV prevention in and through the health system. The program also works with the Timor-Leste Ministry of Education to strengthen women's leadership in schools and facilitate early identification of and support for children with a disability who enter primary education.

## FACILITATING DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

The DFAT-funded **Australia-Cambodia Cooperation for Equitable Sustainable Services – Phase II (ACCESS II)** is improving access to quality and inclusive services for people with disabilities and survivors of GBV in Cambodia. The program addresses the demand- and supply-side barriers to essential service delivery. It is increasing the focus on sub-national levels to complement national-level support and making concerted efforts to address the priorities of indigenous peoples. The program supports stakeholders to deepen societal understanding of the intersectional needs of survivors of GBV and people with disabilities, and then translate this into service delivery that respond to their needs. ACCESS II also supports more inclusive policy, planning and coordination mechanisms. Abt helps system actors ensure that the needs, priorities, preferences, and experiences of survivors of GBV, people with disabilities, and indigenous peoples are included and contribute to strengthening the systems for GBV and disability services. For example, the program facilitates opportunities for the Royal Government of Cambodia to meaningfully engage with people with disabilities, survivors of violence, and indigenous peoples, and the organizations that support their representation and advancement.

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





## MAINSTREAMING GENDER AND INCLUSION IN ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The **USAID-funded Clean Power Asia Program** supported power sector investments in grid-connected renewable energy (RE) sources in **Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam**. The program emphasized the systematic consideration of differences in the conditions, situations, and needs of women and men and the integration of gender equality concerns as a critical part of RE planning and investment. Abt assessed GEDSI issues in these countries' RE sectors and prepared recommendations to increase the engagement and participation of women and other marginalized groups throughout the RE value chain. Abt also developed several tools and approaches to increase inclusive participation, including: a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Checklist that outlined ways to address systemic gender issues in the power sector; a roadmap for gender-sensitive design in program activities (including how to ensure inclusive stakeholder engagement in energy-related planning, policy, and decision-making processes); and establishing networks of prominent women to disseminate information and share benefits equitably.

## INTEGRATING GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IN CLIMATE POLICY, PLANNING, AND ACTION

Under the **Pre-Accreditation Support to the Georgia Energy Development Fund Project**, Abt supported the Republic of Georgia in developing a gender policy and action plan to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment in the Georgia Energy Development Fund (GEDF) and under 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 and human resource practices; working closely with female community leaders and marginalized populations in project consultations; and 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 completed targeted training with GEDF's 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**. GEDSI principles are mainstreamed throughout the GGF's operations, aligning closely with FCDO's GEDSI 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 GGF posts have a gender focal point that supports needs assessments and GEDSI integration into programming, and GEDSI inclusion is measured throughout project implementation using GEDSI parameters in MEL indicators at all levels of the results chain and the risk register. Most recently, GGF supported projects targeting SMEs led by women and persons with disabilities in Ukraine; it is currently undertaking a gender and disability analysis of war reparations policy.

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