



Private Infrastructure
Development Group
Pioneering infrastructure changing lives

PIDG Pathfinder Spring 2020

Delivering impact

Gender equality – a PIDG action plan



*Dahlia Nacef,
Development Impact
Analyst at InfraCo
Africa, explains why
SDG 5: Gender Equality,
is integral to the PIDG
culture and projects.*

I studied Maths at university and I really wanted to find a job where I could apply my background in STEM and the more analytical side, but which also included an element of helping people in some way. I started out working as an intern with InfraCo Africa, and really loved it. After seven months in that role I was happy to take on a more permanent role in Development Impact (DI) with the company.

Analysing impacts

I like analysing the project opportunities which come in and contributing to making sure that we are investing in the right types of projects. That requires assessment of how the projects impact people, the community, the market – and I love considering those elements.

My role has two main overarching elements. First, we screen new projects in the pipeline and analyse the impact we're having on the community, job creation, the planet, women, and children. We also analyse the wider social and economic benefits that accrue such as education and health impacts, to envision how we can enhance the development impact of our projects.

The second element of my role is monitoring and reporting on the projects that we agree to invest in, for example, providing quarterly and monthly reports to PIDG which include information on how a project is progressing from a DI perspective.

A task force approach to gender

Gender equality affects all of us. It is pivotal to economic development, and it is one of PIDG's main strategic aims. If we don't adequately address gender and equality on our projects and within the companies, we're not going to get very far. I think it's really important to address inequalities wherever we can.

It is essential that all the PIDG companies are aligned in the way we address gender issues. We established the [Gender Equity Action task force](#) to enable us to do this, and it's great that we all get to learn from each other's expertise and experiences.

It was important to involve the DI team in the task force from its inception since we are critical to addressing gender inequality within our projects. It is our responsibility to identify those issues and to try to mitigate them in some way.

Gender equity in action

I went to Zambia last year to visit our [pilot irrigation project, Chanyanya](#), and the [Chiansi project](#), which is an expansion of Chanyanya, which was undergoing construction. I was supporting a colleague to conduct interviews with some of the beneficiary smallholders who were impacted by the project. Looking out across the market gardens, it was clear to me that the majority of the people working there were women. Many of them said the project has given them a sense of purpose, allowing them to buy basic necessities, and to send their children to school. One woman explained that the income she gained from her market garden enabled her to purchase some small local housing to rent out!

It was great for me personally and professionally to see such positive impact, and the Chiansi project is set to deliver similar impact for even more families.

The industry I work in is male-dominated and, as a result, I think women sometimes feel the need to prove themselves more, which is unfortunate. But as more women take on leadership and senior management roles, that is starting to shift and change. It can also be intimidating to be the only woman in the room, but hopefully we'll start to see changes there as well.

Inspiring women all around us

There are so many inspirational women from history and today, who inspire me. I would say Fatima Al-Fihri – she founded the first university in Morocco in 859 CE. Also women like Audre Lourde, Harriet Tubman, Malala Yousafzai. They were all pioneers in women's rights and equality. They all faced adversity along the way but still persevered.

I also have to mention the women in my own life – my friends, family and colleagues. They all inspire me in different ways, by standing strong and persevering in face of challenges within their own professions and in society.

I would love to have more and more conversations with the women on our projects – and I'd tell them, keep doing what you're doing, you're inspiring so many people that you may not even know.