Delivering impact

Gender equality – a PIDG action plan

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

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

Gender equality 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.