

Fellows 2008



Acumen Fund Fellows Program

Acumen Fund is a global non-profit venture fund founded in 2001 to address the issue of global poverty. We fill a niche between traditional capital markets and the grant-based philanthropy by investing in enterprises that bring critical goods and services to low-income markets. In addition to investing, we provide the talent needed to support these enterprises and share breakthrough insights from our investing work.

Building scalable and financially sustainable enterprises that make critical goods and services affordable for the poor requires more than financial capital. An equally important constraint is talent. Acumen Fund Fellows are dedicated to bringing a market-based approach to serving low income people in the developing world. The world needs to build an entrepreneurial bench of top talent with strong financial and operational skills, experience in low income markets, and the moral imagination to build enterprises that meet the needs of low income consumers.

Acumen Fund's one year fellowship begins with eight weeks of intensive leadership training based in our New York City office. Training topics include investment and valuation techniques, business models for the poor and risk analysis. The Fellows also meet with leaders from diverse fields (design, investment, venture capital as well as leading writers and thinkers) and explore issues related to our investment geographies (South Asia, and East and South Africa) and sectors (health, water, housing and energy). The Fellows explore their own leadership through discussions, self-reflection and feedback.

Each Fellow is then assigned to a specific investment to support senior management in tackling critical business issues – market expansion, business plan refinement, supply chain improvements, or even leading a new business initiative. At the end of these assignments, the Fellows return to New York City for a month to share experiences and lessons learned and to focus on job opportunities.

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She has been indispensable as we roll out these new clinics. She surprised us with her willingness to go out into the community and listen to how low-income people would use our services. She has demonstrated her ability to manage a large team of a different culture and empathize with us as well as our customers to ensure we get this done.

Viraj Gandhi
CEO of Medicine Shoppe India
on Acumen Fund Fellow Nadaa Taiyab

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The most special experience this year has been connecting with the local community in Arusha and understanding first hand the difficult choices they have to make which Acumen investees try to address. I grew my ability to listen and to understand on an empathetic level the life of Acumen's customer.

Keely Stevenson
2007 Acumen Fellow

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2008 Fellows



Jawad Aslam

Jawad worked as a project manager for Saiban in Lahore, Pakistan, and for a land development company in Maryland. He has experience in both the public and private sectors in Pakistan and the U.S. He earned an MBA from the University of Baltimore.



Catherine Casey

Catherine was named a Catherine B. Reynolds Foundation Fellow for Social Entrepreneurship, and she is the former director of CAMBA's Refugee Professional Training Program. She earned a MPP from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.



Tricia Morente

Tricia is a former consultant at Katzenbach Partners and Braun Consulting and worked with Womens World Banking. She earned an MBA from Columbia Business School and an MIA from the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia.



Wangari Muchoki

Wangari was formerly the Assistant Human Resources Manager for Equity Bank, Kenya's largest microfinance bank. She earned an MBA from the University of Nairobi.



John Tucker

John worked as the Project Lead for IDEO's Transformation Practice and as a consultant at Sapient Corporation. He has a BA from Bates College.



Chris Walker

Chris was the Associate Director of International Relations at the Millennium Challenge Corporation and a former international economist at the U.S. Treasury Department. He earned an MPA from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public & International Affairs at Princeton University.



Jon Yates

Jon was the Organization and Culture Review Leader for Tearfund, the UK's sixth largest development charity, and is a former consultant at McKinsey & Co. He earned a BA at Oxford University.