



ACUMEN FELLOWSHIP IN WEST AFRICA

2023 Programme Overview



ARE YOU LOOKING TO JOIN A COMMUNITY BENT ON CREATING CHANGE?

Each year the West Africa Fellows Programme brings together ~20 bold and generous leaders who are committed to tackling issues of poverty and injustice in West Africa- and equips them with the practices and community needed to deepen and sustain their impact.

Fellows come from all walks of life and are creating hope in a cynical world; they are bridging our divides, connecting our communities, empowering our youth, standing with our vulnerable, protecting our environment, serving us all.

WHAT MAKES A FELLOW

All Fellows have demonstrated a commitment to creating a more just, inclusive and sustainable society through their work, and are:

- Building solutions based on a deep understanding of the issue
- Making a long-term play to change the system they are working in
- Influencing change in their current work, formally or informally
- Ready to undergo an intensive year-long leadership journey

[REGISTER](#) TO BE THE FIRST TO LEARN MORE

OVERVIEW OF THE WEST AFRICA FELLOWS PROGRAMME

Fellows will explore how they can approach personal, organisational and societal challenges differently as they build the tools and mindset to:

- Lead diverse stakeholders through recurring and complex challenges
- Develop stories that speak across lines of difference & move others to action
- Understand systemic problems and design more effective interventions
- Navigate uncertainty and embrace the meaningful process of change
- Cultivate a deeper understanding of yourself and your work

Fellows will be applying the concepts we learn within the cohort, as they seek to model the change they want to see in the world. The Fellowship curriculum draws on powerful leadership frameworks, tools and approaches, including:

- Adaptive Leadership - grounded in Ron Heifetz's work
- Authentic Voice - grounded in Marshall Ganz's life's work
- Good Society Readings - modelled off The Aspen Institute
- Managing Polarities - based on Barry Johnson's work

FELLOWS ARE TYPICALLY ON ONE OF THE FOLLOWING PATHS

Social Entrepreneur

Founder of a for-profit or non-profit organization that develop market-based solutions to tackle issues of poverty & injustice.

Organizational Builder

Supporting the growth of institutions from within (eg. Country Director, CEO, COO)

Intrapreneur

Creating solutions from within existing institutions (eg. Team lead, Head of Dept)

TO [LISTEN](#) TO A FELLOWSHIP INFO-SESSION

This recording is from 2019; note that all timelines used in it are outdated.
Refer to the Application Guide for key application timelines.



“

The Acumen learning structure is built on the idea of knowing yourself first before leading others. For any leader to be effective, he has to first lead himself. Acumen provides that opportunity for one to lead himself first. I am now able to see how I am complicit in certain issues and deeply understand that not all issues are technical thus I am leading how to solve issues adaptively.

”

NELSON OWOICHO, WEST AFRICA FELLOW

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE FELLOWSHIP

The Fellowship begins with a year-long leadership programme - where practical skills meet moral imagination. After the first year, Fellows become part of Acumen's global community of social innovators - committed to lifelong learning, collaboration and accompaniment as they build a world based on dignity.

The Fellows Programme is centred around:

- Self-reflection: Fellows have space to broaden their perspectives and identify areas of personal development
- Cohort based learning: Fellows have space to practice new modes of leadership with a diverse group of builders from across sectors and backgrounds
- Real-world application: Fellows take away learning that can be immediately applied to their social change work to generate lasting impact

THE PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The Fellowship is a deep commitment and serious investment from Fellows and the Acumen Academy team. Over the course of a year, Fellows will engage in a series of virtual workshops and immersive held across West Africa.



VISIT [ACUMEN ACADEMY](https://www.acumenacademy.org) TO APPLY



It's unlike any other fellowship I've participated in. It has helped me understand that real change starts within. Ultimately, it's not our spreadsheet or presentation skills that will save the world. It's our ability to fully experience what it means to be human, and to approach the world from that place of authenticity and real love.



MAHMUD JOHNSON, WEST
AFRICA FELLOW





HOW WE MEASURE IMPACT

1

Diversity of Reach

We identify entrepreneurs and leaders who represent the remarkable diversity of West Africa.

2

Depth of Impact

We create a brave learning space that enables them to develop and apply the practices of bridging difference, thinking systemically and navigating the unknown.

3

Depth of Community

We connect them with a community that accompanies, deepens and sustains, supports and challenges over a lifetime.

4

Amplification of Leadership

So that together, they role model a new definition of success

5

Amplification of Impact

And build solutions that create a more just, inclusive & sustainable world.

“

It thrives on moral imagination: the humility to see the world as it is, and the audacity to imagine the world as it could be. It's having the ambition to learn at the edge, the wisdom to admit failure, and the courage to start again.

”

**ACUMEN
MANIFESTO**



KEY DATES

The selection process is designed to understand an applicant's track record, their capacity to lead and their readiness for the programme. The process is reflective and rigorous, accessible and inclusive, and aims to deliver value - no matter what the outcome.

STAGE 1

APPLICATIONS
OPEN

What are you
telling us?

**1ST JUNE -
12TH JULY**

STAGE 2

PRACTICAL
ASSIGNMENTS

What are you
showing us?

**9TH AUGUST -
23RD AUGUST**

STAGE 3

SELECTION
CONFERENCE

Why is this the right
time for you to
be a Fellow?

**11TH - 12TH NOVEMBER
(VIRTUAL)**

WHAT WE WILL ASK

The Fellowship is designed for builders

We will want to learn more about the track record and vision of the initiative or organisation you are building.

The Fellowship is designed to navigate challenges that have no easy answers

We will want to learn more about the challenges you are facing, who you need to mobilise, and what you need to do differently in order to take your impact to the next level.

The Fellowship is designed for those who are able to commit to the journey

All Fellows have significant obligations – professional and personal. We will want to learn more about your motivation for applying and how you will make it a priority over the year.

The Fellowship is designed to stretch limits & challenge assumptions

It will require work from everyone to build a brave and trusted space, and the programme invites deep introspection on the patterns of our own behaviour. We will want to learn more about why you feel now is the right time for you to go through the Fellowship and stretch your limits.

VISIT THE [APPLICATION GUIDE](#)

A COMMUNITY OF GLOBAL INNOVATORS

After the programme, the Fellows become part of a community of moral leaders who are fighting poverty or injustice in their region and across the world.



AISHATU JAHUN

Aishatu is the Executive Director and Founder of [Baba Azimi Foundation \(BAF\)](#); an organization providing effective protection services for women, children, and persons with disabilities. Aishatu is a 2022 Acumen Fellow



TERESA NJOROGE

is bridging the gap between incarceration and social reintegration in Kenya. Her experience of being convicted of a crime she didn't commit led her to launch [Clean Start](#), and she became an East Africa Fellow in 2016 to deepen her capacity to lead change.



VIMAL KUMAR

was born into India's lowest caste, sometimes referred to as "The Untouchables". He became an Acumen Fellow in 2015, and is mobilising a movement to bring basic human rights to his community as founder of [Movement for Scavenger Community](#).



SHAMIM AKHTAR

is the eldest of eight children, born in a rural village in the Sindh province of Pakistan. Shamim became a Fellow in 2015 and works with [Thardeep Rural Development Program](#) to empower women across rural communities to secure their rights.

LEARN MORE ABOUT
ACUMEN'S GLOBAL COMMUNITY

WHAT OUR FELLOWS SAY



My Acumen journey has been a life-changing experience that challenges me to always be accountable for my values...It is exciting to collaborate with an army of changemakers forming a community to achieve a common goal.



AVRIL,
WA 2019 FELLOW



Going into the program, I was a little guarded and felt defeated (almost). My journey for social change felt like a losing battle. I felt alone and that my fight was like tears in the ocean. However, I quickly realized that I had a family that shared similar experiences. Despite the challenges they often faced, they were all optimistic about the impact they had on the lives of others.



SALAMARTU,
WA 2020 FELLOW



The fellowship enables one to see things from wider perspective and inject into your person the ability to do things differently and activate your mind to take on tasks that ordinarily you would be very reluctant to take.



ALEXANDER EJOHA,
WA 2021 FELLOW

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



And individual supporters