Acumen Fund and Dow Partner to Scale Social Enterprises in East and West Africa

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Commitment announced at the Clinton Global Initiative Annual Meeting brings funding and technical expertise to entrepreneurs providing low-income consumers with energy, agricultural inputs, water and sanitation

NEW YORK--(BUSINESS WIRE)--At the 2012 Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) Annual Meeting today, Acumen Fund, a nonprofit global venture fund addressing poverty across Africa and South Asia, and The Dow Chemical Company (NYSE:DOW) announced a collaboration to scale innovative social enterprises in East and West Africa.

Working directly with pioneering entrepreneurs who are at the center of new businesses aimed at serving poor communities across the continent, this partnership aims to accelerate the development and distribution of crucial products and services in the sectors of agriculture, water, sanitation and energy. Through direct collaboration, social enterprises in Acumen’s portfolio will gain access to Dow’s expertise and technical assistance resources to help scale their businesses and better serve their customers. At the same time, these businesses will share practical insights on how corporations can achieve growth and social impact in Sub-Saharan Africa. Dow recently opened offices in Kenya and Ghana.

“This is an extremely exciting step for Acumen Fund. During more than ten years of investing, we have come to appreciate the various types of support that social enterprises require when creating new systems and solutions for the underserved,” said Jacqueline Novogratz, CEO and Founder of Acumen Fund. “With Dow’s support, these businesses have an opportunity to access valuable expertise, which will translate into substantial impact for communities across East and West Africa.”

The collaboration represents an important opportunity to create shared learning among social enterprises and global corporations whose focus is on serving critical needs in Africa at a time of significant business growth.

“Dow is proud to collaborate with Acumen to advance social enterprises for business growth in the region,” said Bo Miller, global director, Corporate Citizenship, and president and executive director of The Dow Chemical Company Foundation. “Our desire is that our citizenship efforts are an extension of our values as a global corporation. This partnership demonstrates our priorities as a company, and gives us an avenue to put our talent, expertise and financial resources to work for sustainable change.”

Despite the potential for growth and the entrance of a growing number of major corporations into African markets, hundreds of millions of people on the continent still struggle to meet their basic needs.

“The development of social entrepreneurs is a significant step in supporting local economies and addressing societal needs,” said Stephane Paquier, president, Dow Chemical Africa. “This opportunity provides a great platform to leverage the capabilities and skills of Dow, Acumen and others to provide the needed scale for sustainable growth in Africa.”

Though the region has undergone significant transformation with economic and developmental initiatives being led by governments and the private sector across several countries, it continues to be impacted by systemic challenges including lack of access to energy, agriculture inputs and safe drinking water that limit opportunity at the household level and hamper economic growth. Today, more than 75% of East and West Africa’s population lives in rural areas, the majority of whom are smallholder farmers living on less than $2 a day. Poverty is also pervasive in urban areas, with more than half of the population of some major cities living in slums without basic services like water, sanitation and electricity.

For additional information on Acumen Fund or Dow, please visit www.acumenfund.org or www.dow.com or contact Yasmina Zaidman at yzaidman@acumenfund.org or Dow’s Kyle Bandlow at kbandlow@dow.com.

About Acumen Fund

Acumen Fund is working to create a world beyond poverty by investing in social enterprises, emerging leaders and breakthrough ideas. We invest patient capital in business models that deliver critical goods and services to the world’s poor, improving the lives of millions. Since 2001, Acumen Fund has globally invested more than $75 million in 69 companies. We are also working to build a global community of emerging leaders that believe in creating a more inclusive world through the tools of both business and philanthropy. Please visit www.acumenfund.org for more information.
**About Dow**

Dow (NYSE: DOW) combines the power of science and technology to passionately innovate what is essential to human progress. The Company connects chemistry and innovation with the principles of sustainability to help address many of the world's most challenging problems such as the need for clean water, renewable energy generation and conservation, and increasing agricultural productivity. Dow's diversified industry-leading portfolio of specialty chemical, advanced materials, agrosciences and plastics businesses delivers a broad range of technology-based products and solutions to customers in approximately 160 countries and in high growth sectors such as electronics, water, energy, coatings and agriculture. In 2011, Dow had annual sales of $60 billion and employed approximately 52,000 people worldwide. The Company's more than 5,000 products are manufactured at 197 sites in 36 countries across the globe. References to “Dow” or the “Company” mean The Dow Chemical Company and its consolidated subsidiaries unless otherwise expressly noted. More information about Dow can be found at www.dow.com.

**About the Clinton Global Initiative**

Established in 2005 by President Bill Clinton, the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) convenes global leaders to create and implement innovative solutions to the world’s most pressing challenges. CGI Annual Meetings have brought together more than 150 heads of state, 20 Nobel Prize laureates, and hundreds of leading CEOs, heads of foundations and NGOs, major philanthropists, and members of the media. To date CGI members have made more than 2,100 commitments, which have already improved the lives of 400 million people in more than 180 countries. When fully funded and implemented, these commitments will be valued at $69.2 billion.

CGI also convenes CGI America, a meeting focused on collaborative solutions to economic recovery in the United States, and CGI University (CGI U), which brings together undergraduate and graduate students to address pressing challenges in their community or around the world. For more information, visit clintonglobalinitiative.org and follow us on Twitter @ClintonGlobal and Facebook at facebook.com/clintonglobalinitiative.

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