Title of Session: GALI Workshop: Gender-lens Acceleration & Benchmarking Tool Demo

Session Description: The Global Accelerator Learning Initiative (GALI) team from ANDE will lead a two-part workshop for accelerators. Participants will learn about GALI’s latest findings on gender, hear about lessons learned in accelerating women-led ventures, and brainstorm with peers about ways to be more gender-inclusive in each step of the acceleration process. GALI will also demo a new benchmarking tool that allows accelerators to compare their performance against GALI’s global dataset.

Moderator: Abby Davidson, ANDE

Discussants:

- Heather Matranga, Village Capital
- Lily Yu, Sasakawa Peace Foundation
- Henrique Bussacos, Impact Hub

Key Takeaways on Gender-Lens Acceleration:

1. In the GALI dataset, roughly 50% of ventures that apply to accelerators have a woman on the founding team, and of those only 15% have founding teams of all women. Preliminary analysis of venture performance data suggests that women-led ventures are just as likely as male-led ventures to have revenue at the time of application to an accelerator, but are significantly less likely to have equity investment. Acceleration doesn’t appear to close this gap, but actually may exacerbate the investment deficit women-led ventures face.

2. Village Capital, Sasakawa Pace Foundation, and Impact Hub are all undertaking research on gender-lens acceleration, which will be released between Fall 2019 – Spring 2020. Short descriptions of each project are below:
   a. In partnership with IFC, Village Capital is undertaking research to identify the specific gaps that women-led ventures face in acceleration and develop hypotheses about how accelerators can address these inequities. The project will be followed by experimental Vilcap programs that test these hypotheses.
   b. In partnership with Frontier Incubators, Sasakawa Peace Foundation is developing a Gender-lens Incubation and Acceleration Toolkit, which breaks down the components of an incubation/acceleration program, the key problems faced regarding gender, and potential strategies programs can undertake to apply a gender-lens to their operations.
   c. In partnership with INCAE, Impact Hub is conducting a study using data from participants of Accelerate2030 (a global acceleration program in partnership with UN) in Latin America. Based on the research, Impact Hub will create a toolkit for accelerators on how they can apply a gender lens to their program management and measurement.

3. Highlights from the panel discussion and brainstorming session include:
   a. Gender-lens at the application/selection stage:
      i. Programs have to be proactive to build a diverse pipeline – including targeted outreach of women-led ventures (and sometimes even “convincing” since,
anecdotally, women entrepreneurs tend to be less likely to think they’re ready for acceleration). Programs should not have to sacrifice quality [for gender diversity] if they’re building a diverse pipeline.

ii. Gender diversity among program facilitators and staff (including selection committees, mentors, etc.) allows programs to tap into more diverse networks, and thus build more high-quality, diverse pipelines of entrepreneurs.

iii. Other approaches programs could consider include blind selection (hiding entrepreneur names when reviewing applications), providing training on gender bias to staff and participating mentors/investors, and reviewing marketing and promotional materials for gender inclusion (can women “see” themselves in the program?).

b. Gender-lens acceleration at the program delivery stage:
   i. Programs should consider which program elements are most vulnerable to gender bias (for example, Village Capital has stopped including a pitch day for this reason).
   ii. Equity investment is less common among women-led ventures, but progress is being seen in debt, philanthropic capital, and revenue growth as means of increasing funds. Should accelerators look at different KPIs for women-led ventures? (Could this be helpful or just exacerbate existing gender gaps?)
   iii. Networking events are more women-friendly when more women are in the room. There has also been some feedback that less alcohol and more daytime events can be useful (though this is culture and context-specific).

c. Gender-lens acceleration at the post-program stage:
   i. Programs should work with investors and angel networks (particularly female investors) to build up the ecosystem where there is a strong female presence on the investment side.
   ii. Regardless of gender, encouraging healthy cohort dynamics and networking post-program is valuable for program alumni.

Key Takeaways on the Benchmarking Tool Demo:
1. GALI released a beta version of a new online tool for accelerators. Program managers are invited to use the site to develop their data collection plans, align survey questions with GALI’s methodology, and benchmark their ventures’ performance against GALI’s global dataset of ventures that applied to over 175 programs worldwide.
2. The GALI team welcomes feedback on the tool. To learn more and share your feedback, register for an informational webinar on October 22nd at 9am EDT.

Links/Resources mentioned or discussed during session:
- GALI Benchmarking Tool
- GALI Venture Dataset
- Email Abby Davidson at Abigayle.davidson@aspeninst.org with any questions/feedback.