

Aspirations Education 2011 - Communication On Progress

The UN Global Compact encourages businesses to align companies with the 10 universally accepted sustainability principles and practices within their sphere of influence. Aspirations Education has embraced and enacted these core values from its inception and continued to do so in becoming a signatory to the United Nations Global Compact. Aspirations Education was launched in order to meet the growing demand for guidance and counseling for higher studies. Career Guidance and Placement Services were not rare in our country but what was lacking was a comprehensive service that has students' interests at heart, rather than carrying on purely as an income-generating venture.

Aspirations Education has been a privileged member of the UNGC steering committee of the Sri Lanka Network. We have also been appointed to the Board of Directors of the UNGC Network Ceylon. The UNGC Local Network's role is to root the Global Compact within Sri Lanka and to facilitate the progress of companies engaged in the Global Compact with respect to implementation of the ten principles, create opportunities for multi-stakeholder engagement, collective action and to deepen the learning experience of all participants through their own activities and promote action in support of broader UN goals.

June 4, 2011
H.E. Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General
United Nations
New York, NY 10017
USA

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

I am pleased to confirm that Aspirations Education which became a signatory to the United Nations Global Compact on 11 June 2008, by submitting our Communication of Progress continues to pledge our support to the ten principles of the Global Compact with respect to human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption.

With this communication, we express our intent to advance those principles within our sphere of influence like how we have been doing in the past. We are committed to making the Global Compact and its principles part of the strategy, culture and day-to-day operations of our company, and to engage in collaborative projects which advance the broader development goals of the United Nations, particularly the Millennium Development Goals.

Aspirations Education has made a clear statement of this commitment to our stakeholders and the general public. We have trained our staff about the UNGC Framework. We have also participated in the below conferences and training sessions on our initiative.

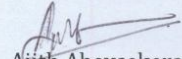
- ESCAP 14 D project -Embedding United Nations Global Compact and Sustainability into your organization, April 2010, Colombo
- United Nations Global Compact Leaders Summit - Building a new era of sustainability, June 2010, New York
- ESCAP 14 D Master Trainer Project-Practical Implementation of Global Compact and Corporate Social Responsibility, March 2011, Bangkok
- Annual Local Networks Forum (ALNF) at United Nations Global Compact Week, May 2011, Copenhagen
- Aspirations Education has supported the Foundation for the Global Compact by making a voluntary 2011 contribution of 550 USD, recommended by UNGC for an SME

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UNGC Network Ceylon where our General Manager, Deepamala Abeysekera sits on the board.

We support public accountability and transparency, and therefore commit to report on progress *annually* according to the Global Compact COP policy

Sincerely yours,


Ajith Abeysekera
Chairman

The following report provides a summary of Aspirations' activities in relation to and progress in implementing the UN Global Compact's Ten Principles.

Human Rights

Principle 1: Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and

Principle 2: make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.

- ❖ It is a general practice at Aspirations Education to uphold the internationally accepted human rights of all stakeholders.
- ❖ All operations are conducted in an ethical manner that support and protect the rights and interests of all human beings as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- ❖ Our core business is based on the right to education: Article 26 Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- ❖ In Sri Lanka, out of the large number of students who sit for the Advanced Level Examinations annually, a very high percentage of students who qualify are quite unsuccessful in gaining admission to local universities mainly due to lack of placement capacity. This compels students who can afford to look for higher education options in universities and institutes abroad; and going overseas for further education has become increasingly common practice among the student population of Sri Lanka, but, unfortunately, most of them are greatly hampered or misinformed due to a lack of proper channels to disseminate relevant and accurate information. This at times had lead to frustration, despair and disillusionment of both students and their parents. Further, some of these credulous students become victims of unscrupulous elements who are on the lookout to thrive at their expense. It is at this crucial juncture in our country, Aspirations Education has placed great value in committing resources and effort in our enterprise to provide genuine career guidance and counseling to students keeping their interests and aspirations at heart, carrying out this all important mission of giving hope to a new generation through a sound education, contributing to chart a new beginning for Sri Lanka
- ❖ Aspirations Education Foundation was launched in 2007 to assist students of low-income groups, who are deprived of the basic necessities in life, to follow an uninterrupted school career.
- ❖ Recognizing the full development of the human personality and strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms upheld in Article 26 & Article 29, conducted lecture series viz Learn Earn & Serve Our Nation (LESON) featuring renowned personalities who have served Sri Lanka and television series for students to showcase their talents and team spirits.

Measurements

Measurement for Aspirations' Foundation- Apeksha Scholarship Scheme

- ❖ Apeksha Scholarships Scheme was pioneered on 13 September 2007. Since then the scholarship has funded 115 deserving students from 15 Districts including Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Trincomali, Ampara, Badulla, Monaragala, Matara, Galle, Kalutara, Colombo, Gampaha, Kegalle, Ratnapura, Kandy, and Matale. The selection of candidates for the Apeksha program was carried out by some of the senior officials of Aspirations Education under the direction of heads of schools and tutorial staff; and subsequently, an in-depth survey was conducted to select the 115 students who needed financial assistance the most. Civil authorities of the respective areas too helped us to assess the actual living standards of these students and their parents. A file with relevant data and an account is opened in the name of each scholarship holder.
- ❖ Apeksha Scholarship is a monthly scholarship awarded to students of 3 scholarship categories viz, Year 2-6, Year 6-8 and Year 9-13. If a student in year 2 is awarded the Apeksha scholarship, s/he would continuously receive the monthly payment until the end of his/her school career, provided the student maintains her academic standards. The Foundation reserves the right to cancel a scholarship if it is discovered that counterfeit information had been submitted when the student initially applied for the scholarship or s/he is unable to maintain the minimum academic standards.
- ❖ The list of beneficiaries are published on our corporate website-

<http://www.aspirations.edu.lk/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Apeksha-2007.pdf>

<http://www.aspirations.edu.lk/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Apeksha-2008.pdf>

Measurements for Personality Development initiatives

❖ Pathbreakers Season 1

Season 1 pioneered by Aspirations, takes the credit for being the first English language simulation of the reality show format in Sri Lanka. Aspirations Education broadcast a reality show, where contestants analyze Business Cases Studied provided by the Harvard Business School where issues and decisions of real-time organizations had to be evaluated. 8 teams, representing leading educational institutes in the field of business and management in Sri Lanka, competed in the show. The participating teams simulated the role of “Management Consultants” to an organization’s Board of Directors.

❖ Pathbreakers Season 2

Pathbreakers season 2, pioneered by Aspirations, was a refreshing take on the reality format where brains were matched up with survival skills, mixing elements from the tried-and-tested Television Quiz format with the ever-popular Reality Show, Pathbreakers put to test

both knowledge and interpersonal skills of contestants. The winner of this season show was offered an all expenses paid trip to Malaysia and Singapore.

❖ **Colombo Model United Nations 2010**

Aspiration Education was the platinum sponsor and strategic partner of the Colombo Model United Nations, officially the world's fifth largest student-run model united nations' conference. The reason for Aspirations involvement was because Aspirations believe CO-MUN , to be a forum that serves as an ideal platform for the youth of Sri Lanka and students from around the world to come together on a common mission, empowering them through education to join hands and voice and express their opinion at local, national and international levels. The theme of CO-MUN 2010 conference was "Human Trafficking"-the fastest-growing criminal industry in the world with the total annual revenue for trafficking in persons estimated to be between USD\$5 billion and \$9 billion.

❖ **Learn Earn & Serve Our Nation (LESON)**

"LESON" (Learn, Earn & Serve Our Nation) -series of lectures was conducted with renowned personalities in Sri Lanka who are at the forefront playing active roles in the nation building exercise and have re-created the strategy in their respective fields. These 'Guru's and Role Models, who have spelled out the formula of success in their respective fields and driving Sri Lanka to the next dimension, educated and enriched the students about opportunities, challenges, scope and potential available in diverse fields, thereby inspiring students to make informed decisions on their career choice. This was a career guidance session for students to make informed decision looking at personalities who have made the mark in respective fields.

<http://www.aspirations.edu.lk/exhibition/guest-speakers/>

Measurement for upholding the Right to Education - Recognition and validations AE has received from governmental and other professional bodies, due to their high quality, dependable and trustworthy service offered over the years to students around the country.

- ❖ Aspirations Education has been approved and authorized by Australian High Commission to assess and issue Pre Visa Assessments (PVA) on behalf of the Australian High Commission. We have maintained a very high visa approval rate of 98% over the last seven years.
- ❖ AE is a Trusted Partner with United Kingdom Boarder Agency (UKBA) in placing students to British Universities. AE was also a pioneer member of the British Education Representatives Association in Sri Lanka, (BERA) established with the recognition of the British Council in order to ensure ethical conduct in all representatives in the market and our Chairman was the Founder Chairman of the same. AE is registered in the UCAS customer database and are permitted to process the application via UCAS for British Universities.

- ❖ Aspirations was trained and certified as a Singapore Education Specialist by Government owned Singapore Education.
- ❖ Aspirations was trained and certified as a New Zealand Education Specialist by New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (Govt owned) which sponsored Aspirations to visit all leading universities in New Zealand to promote NZ education in Sri Lanka.
- ❖ AE is the leading student placement centres for Malaysian Universities
- ❖ Furthering our mandate to disseminate information, conducted Aspirations International Education Exhibition five consecutive years continuously with the participation of more than 40 prestigious Universities and Institutions from Australia, UK, New Zealand, USA , Malaysia and Singapore.

Labour Standards

Principle 3: Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;

Principle 4: the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour;

Principle 5: the effective abolition of child labour; and

Principle 6: the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

- ❖ Aspirations employment policy commits us to respect the right of all employees and commits us to not tolerate any inhumane treatment of people working for us, including any form of forced labour and physical punishment
- ❖ Aspirations prohibits the use of child labour in any form. We do not employ anyone below the age of 15
- ❖ Aspirations promote workplace equality and seeks to eliminate all forms of unfair discrimination. Equitable processes for recruitment, promotion and remuneration are in place, which ensure employment and promotion on the basis of job requirements and merit and ensure that all employees and employment applicants are treated equally irrespective of race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, family circumstances, political opinion, trade union membership, age, nationality or disability
- ❖ Supporting Labour standards in The International Labour Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, Aspirations in its sphere of influence, goes a step further to eliminate child labour by helping students to

realize the right to education. In this regard, Aspirations Education has launched the Apeksha scholarship programme to help students of low-income groups, who are deprived of even the basic necessities to follow an uninterrupted school career in Sri Lanka, let alone pursuing education abroad. 115 deserving students from 15 Districts had been sustained by monthly scholarships. They would be receiving the monthly payment until their school career comes to an end, provided they maintain reasonable academic standards. This is a first step Aspirations is taking in realizing the Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education. As such by receiving our professional services absolutely free of charge, students who can afford to go abroad will effortlessly and automatically be helping their own brethren who are not as fortunate as them.

- ❖ Another Millennium Development Goal the UN is trying to reach, by 2015, is eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, defining the objectives as achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people. UN Global compact encourages companies to develop Partnership Projects to contribute to the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals. In line with Global compact's vision, Aspirations Education (Pvt) Ltd., along with its CSR arm, Aspirations Education Foundation, joined hands with British Council in organizing the National Entrepreneurship Week Sri Lanka 2008 (NEW 08). As the Strategic Partner in the Enterprise Education Exhibition, we got industries from large scale to SME and universities across Sri Lanka to put up stalls and display their enterprise related activities, innovative products, services and success stories. We also initiated strategic dialogue, parallel to the exhibition, among the corporate community, academia and students, with the aim of coming up with a short and long term action plan to address the unemployment problem and lack of entrepreneurship in Sri Lanka. The objective was to explore means of influencing the soft-skill development and employability of the students of Sri Lanka.
- ❖ This was done keeping in mind that the United Nations Global Compact encourages signatories to the compact to facilitate dialogues on issues related to the Compact principles, responsible corporate citizenship and the advancement of the eight UN Millennium Development Goals. Dialogue related to employment and entrepreneurship initiated by Aspirations we hope will serve as an engagement platform for participants, to move innovative solutions to the level of implementation.

Environment

Principle 7: Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges

Principle 8: undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and

Principle 9: encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

- ❖ Aspirations Education actively strives for recognized best environmental performance in our day to day operations and our sphere of influence.
- ❖ Aspirations Education, takes leadership and an active role in organizing the Quarterly Sustainability Knowledge Hub of the Global Compact Ceylon Network , which educates companies from SMEs to MNCs about environment suitability which helps to drive economic growth sustainably. To date there has been two such knowledge hubs organized centring the theme environment trusteeship and sustainability.

Anti-Corruption

Principle 10: Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

- ❖ Unfortunately, most of the students who seek to go abroad for higher studies are greatly hampered or misinformed due to a lack of proper channels to disseminate relevant and accurate information. These credulous students become victims of unscrupulous elements who are on the lookout to thrive at their expense. In the contrary we have established a clear reputation where students and parents have depended on us and most of our referrals come through word of mouth.
- ❖ Our unswerving determination to be the most excellent as a corporate entity has won the admiration of international universities in Australia, New Zealand, UK, Malaysia, Singapore, and local principals, teachers, and parents alike.
- ❖ Our services to the students and parents and in counselling are absolutely free of charge and there is a zero tolerance policy for corruption.
- ❖ In staff training, consequences of corruption are taught and the importance of rendering a quality, genuine and ethical service is driven in.

Measurements

- ❖ Australian High Commission Appointed Aspirations Education as a "Streamlined (PVA) Agent" . Appointment as a Streamlined Agent by Department of Immigration & Citizenship - (DIAC) attached to the Australian High Commission (AHC) in Colombo , have been made considering many criteria that were met by representatives all over the country over a long period in the business. Out of over 100 such entities only 7 were selected to bestow this privilege and Aspirations Education was one of the first to get the PVA status by the High Commission where we are authorised to act on behalf of the High commission in issuing the visa before the final visa. This endorses our genuineness as there have been other entities who have lost their PVA status due to not adhering to the rigid criteria set by the HC.
- ❖ Four of us from the above seven with the PVA authorization are working collectively to develop and subscribe to a common frame of "Ethics". The alliance formed by us is named to be the Streamlined Agents Collective (SAC). We have done this with the aim of giving the best service to genuine students and the parents and to inform students about uncorrupted channel of information dissemination they can count on without being played out or mislead at the crucial juncture of their lives.

Trainings and Conferences Aspirations Education participated

- ❖ ESCAP 14 D project -embedding United Nations Global Compact and Sustainability into your organization, April 2010, Colombo
- ❖ United Nations Global Compact Leaders Summit - Building a new era of sustainability, June 2010, New York
- ❖ ESCAP 14 D Master Trainer Project on "Practical Implementation of Global Compact and Corporate Social Responsibility", March 2011, Bangkok
- ❖ Annual Local Networks Forum (ALNF) at United Nations Global Compact Week, May 2011, Copenhagen
- Aspirations Education has supported the Foundation for the Global Compact by making a voluntary 2011 contribution of 550 USD , recommended by UNGC for an SME

As such, The UN Global Compact and its principles have become a part of strategy, culture and day-to-day operations of Aspirations. It is indeed a widely visible commitment to the

implementation, disclosure, and promotion of its ten universal principles throughout its operations and sphere of influence.