

# The UN Global Impact Initiative

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## *SEBC Action*

- Communication and visibility of the initiative
- SEBC activities towards the Global Compact Initiative

## Statement

### Commitment to the Global Compact Initiative

Having joined the Global Compact initiative motivated by deep belief in the initiative and its principle issue areas of human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption, the Syrian Enterprise & Business Centre (SEBC) emphasises hereby its utter commitment to continue enacting the principles of Global Compact in all its strategies, work culture, projects and day to day activities.

We have worked hard over the last two years to make things happen and spared no effort to bring awareness to the initiative whether internally within our staff work ethics or externally within the business community, and we are certain to do this again and again.

On a more international note, we have provided visibility and mind-set exposure to the initiative through the Enterprise Europe Network which is channelled in more than 600 hundred calibre organisations throughout the world.

Our commitment to the initiative forms part of our attitude towards social corporate responsibility as we share WEF belief that that “economic progress without social development is not sustainable, while social development without economic progress is not feasible.”

Based on our mandate and scope of intervention as an implementation agency for international development partners programmes, we have been active into two principle issue areas over the past two years, namely labour and anti-corruption. We pledge, however, to extend soon our intervention within the Global Compact initiative to cover human rights and environment issues.

On a more assertive note, the SEBC is and shall stay resolute to advance the broader development goals of the United Nations, particularly the Eight Millennium Goals.

Yours Sincerely,

Ms Noha Chuck  
CEO

## Actions Implemented in the reporting period

### Introduction

Syrian Enterprise & Business Centre is high calibre business development agency that is acting as an implementation agency international development partners programmes.

The SEBC has been engaged, in the period covered by this report, in implementing four EU-funded programmes- SMEs Support Programme (SSP), Business Environment Simplification Programme (BESP), Trade Enhancement Programme (TEP) and Quality Infrastructure Strengthening Programme (QP). These four programmes aim at enriching the Syrian business sector and providing more tools and means for increased competitiveness.

In the same endeavour, SEBC is hosting the National Competitiveness Observatory (NCO), the Loan Guarantee Institution in Syria (LGIS) and the Syrian Management Consultants Association (SMCA).

Working to implement these programmes, SEBC is supporting foremost initiatives that contribute to the labour pillar of the global compact principles- SKILLS and Business Incubation, and to the anti-corruption pillar- ISRAR and Companies House.

### Progress by Principle Issue Areas

#### Principle Issue Area 2 – Labour

##### 1. **SKILLS (Superior Knowledge by Intensive Labour Learning Schemes)**

SKILLS is an initiative that started 2008 as a pilot phase with the aim of helping the youth acquire excellence in soft and hard skills to ease their engagement in the marketplace. It involves enrolling students for a one-year term, the first six months of which are devoted to the delivery of 26 training modules accompanied by ICDL and English language training. The remaining six months are devoted to the placement of students in companies and plants with the aim to acquire fundamentals of market place experience.

24 graduates were enrolled in the pilot year. This number increased six folds in two years, while geographic reach was duly expanded. The impact was tremendous in terms of recruitment figures and business community satisfaction.

SKILLS as a curriculum is building capacities and capabilities that are in line with the Global Compact principles such as business ethics, total quality management, environment considerations in strategic planning and corporate social responsibility (CSR).



SKILLS encouraged others such as the business community and enterprise sector to have more CSR in the shape of commitment to the SKILLS initiative. This has not only been achieved domestically, but internationally too, e.g. the Damask Rose UK based foundation sponsored a trend-setter one time management administration internship in Britain for the best graduate of 2009.

SKILLS had fruitful cooperation with UN agencies such as UNHCR and UNRWA and a model replica found its way to cover Iraqi and Palestinian refugees.

### **The SEBC Business Incubator**

The business incubation model implemented by SEBC has been designed at the outset with the aim to help start-ups in their early stages of doing business. This objective was later modified to include technical support and provision of knowhow to the Syrian business incubation industry.

The SEBC Business Incubator started its operation in Damascus mid-2007 and expanded to Aleppo in 2009. Through these two branches, SEBC BI supported more than 100 start-ups by means of mentoring, consultancy, coaching, training, access to information, access to finance, networking, promotion and desk space facilities.

SEBC BI found a niche market of professional services sector to be supported due to future potentials and availability of talented entrepreneurs. Other sectors are supported especially when the intellectual capital is proved to be an asset.

SEBC BI is supporting many business support institutions with the business incubation component. The SEBC signed MOUs with ICT BI, JCI-Syria, BIDAYA, JASS, SCS and Intelqa of Shell who are supporting start-ups. The mode of cooperation is about exchanging information, training, know-how and networking.

SEBC BI extended its geographic coverage to be in untapped areas such as Assokhneh, DierEzzor and Salameya in the North-East of Syria. The support to these remote areas targets assisting the NGO and NPO sector there to build business incubation industry. The SEBC BI is supporting also the Industrial Cities of Hassayain Homs and Adrain Damascus in their efforts to create enterprises and jobs.

SEBC BI is devoting some of its efforts to raising awareness where efforts are channelled to build leadership, entrepreneurship and innovation spirit.

The Global Compact principles are deep in the day to day activities of the SEBC BI. Despite the importance of employment as a target, SEBC BI adopts the principles in the selection criteria for applicants joining the business incubator. The environment related sectors are considered a priority, and there is absolutely no gender, religion, race or nationality discrimination.

The increased potential of the NGO and NPO sector is addressed into the orientations of the SEBC BI. Day after day, new NGOs are joining the efforts of the SEBC BI towards higher employment, entrepreneurship and innovation.

Assokhneh business incubator (under establishment) shall provide for a specialised agro business incubator where emphasis was given for green industries and energy alternatives.

#### Principle Issue Area 4 – Anti-Corruption

SEBC is committed to fighting corruption and believes that cumbersome and heavily restrictive regulation provides the best environment for corruption to grow in size and scale and to develop new means and ways.

To that end, the SEBC is working on making the business environment more business friendly; an environment that is enabling rather than controlling, thus eliminating one major tool for corruption.

#### Companies House

Companies House is an initiative designed by the SEBC and later supported by the Business Environment Simplification Programme.

The initiative aims at facilitating business licensing, approvals and permits, hence significantly reducing cost for entrepreneurs, especially SMEs. It incorporates a mechanism of working with the respective ministries and governmental institutions involved in business licensing and approvals via service delivery agreements that shall help:

- Fix exactly the cost involved in each type of business licensing process
- Fix exactly the time limit needed to get a certain license of business approval done

Customers (potential business owners) shall be served via an advanced interface (Companies House) that incorporates case agents who handle clients' files from A to Z. Companies House shall have as well a web portal with an integrated business permissions wizard capable of answering all clients' queries.

SEBC has managed to push this initiative forward and has gained the support of the highest circles of decision making in Syria.

The services of Companies House shall be delivered against minimal fees. Based on the number of transactions delivered, these fees shall be more than enough to:

- Sustain the operations of Companies House

- Provide participating ministries and governmental bodies with added income to be used for motivating their own staff members involved in the licensing of businesses

### **ISRAR (Initiating Syrian Regulatory and Administrative Reform)**

This is another initiative that is being currently implemented by the SEBC and the Business Environment Simplification Programme. The initiative aims at making the environment greener for businesses to grow and flourish through:

- **Regulatory Impact Assessment**

A simple 'checklist' approach will be introduced within the Government of Syria to inform and assess the impact on, and encourage comment from, those who may be affected by new proposed legislation. This checklist will be used as a basis for public consultation. Consultation will be carried out in a systematic way with all parties targeted at those with a clear interest in the policy in question or those potentially affected by proposals for new regulation, or where any regulation is being changed significantly. Issues covered in the RIA include;

- a. Purpose and intended effect of legislation
- b. Options to achieve the desired objective
- c. Costs and Benefits
- d. Small/ Micro firms Impact Test
- e. 'Test Run' of Business forms
- f. Competition Assessment

- **Enhancing the Quality of Legal Drafting**

Legal Drafting, seeks to build capacity within the Government of Syria to ensure that the policy objectives of Governments are more effectively translated into legislation through the production of well-crafted laws.

A new initiative has been launched to enhance the quality of business laws promulgated in Syria through the establishment and institutionalization of legal drafting courses. Key topics being covered during the course are;

- Analysing best practices in legislative drafting
- Comparing the difference between effective and ineffective regulations
- Describe the key challenges and impediments to successful regulation drafting
- Outlining the core elements of a process for drafting high quality regulations

- **Application of the Regulatory Guillotine**

The Regulatory guillotine focuses upon improving the regulatory environment by performing a series of reviews and recommending changes to existing regulations. Using specialist software and specially trained staff, business related

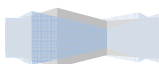
regulations will be inputted into a database, sorted around topic and subject areas and reviewed to ensure that they are legal, necessary and business friendly.

- **Simplification of Administrative Procedures**

This is to modernize and simplify business licensing administrative procedures to ensure that they meet the needs of the modern Syrian economy and in particular the requirements of young and emerging businesses.

This will seek in particular to address current features of the licensing process that cumulatively cause the poor service experienced by business customers (particularly SME's) of business licensing. These include;

- 1. Extensive information exchange, data redundancy and re-keying
- 2. Too many Controls and Checks
- 3. Rework, Iteration & Duplication of work
- 4. Complexity, Exceptions & Special cases
- 5. Gatekeepers at every stage of the process



## Measurement of Outcome

The interventions implemented by the SEBC with the assistance of the programmes it is hosting live truly to the principle issue areas of the UN Global Compact initiative and embody the organisation genuine commitment to realise the objectives and principles of the initiative in everything that it does.

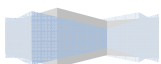
The activities described in the previous section have resulted in important outputs that have genuine impact on the Syrian business scene, though in terms of change of mind-set rather than concrete measurable figures. These activities have:

- ❖ SKILLS started Syria moving towards coming up with innovative solutions to bridge the gap between educational accumulation, even VET wise, and the requirements of the market place. It got Syrian graduates determined to make an additional step to be in better position to be employed and better paid. Notwithstanding this, the SKILLS initiative forms a reference point to all potential international development partners programmes targeting the area of training.
- ❖ Likewise, the SEBC Business Incubator is now a trend setter, especially in the way it brought a change from the conventional approach to physical incubation into the innovative approach of virtual incubation. The design of this incubator is now adopted as the benchmark for establishing similar incubators across Syria; thanks to SEBC, the incubation industry is now a top consideration even in the remote much less developed regions of Syria, e.g. the North-East region.
- ❖ On a different note, the intervention of SEBC in the implementation of the activities of simplifying the business environment has succeeded to gain the commitment of the Syrian government with the potential to effect significant changes that shall eventually make the business environment more enabling and much less controlling; a change that shall inevitably result in less corruption whether by civil servants or private sector businesses.



## Annexes

- Letter to SEBC club members
- Letter to SEBC partners
- Letter published on SEBC website



## ● Letter to SEBC club members

Dear SEBC Club Members;

The Syrian Enterprise & Business Centre (SEBC) is by now a key player in the "United Nations Global Impact Initiative" network in Syria which consists of representatives from the business sector, NGOs, and federations of commerce and industry.

Throughout the years SEBC has increasingly realised the importance of this initiative as a unique strategic platform for advancing commitment to sustainability, corporate responsibility and the promotion of economic and trade integration through SEBC's business missions and forums.

SEBC believes that through the power of team work, where everyone contributes within their sphere of influence, rewarding results can be achieved, noticed and felt with time.

This can be noticed clearly in the increasing change in the mindset of Syrian business society, with new members always joining the initiative. As a result Syria was called a leadership case in 2008, when it was ranked as the first country based on its network growth ratio among ten other countries.

Based on the previous facts, SEBC would hereby like to take this opportunity to encourage all of its club members and partners to contribute to the United Nations Global Impact Initiative and to realise its goals by committing to its 10 principles in order to exchange experiences and inspire practical solutions to challenging problems and to reach a case where an overlap between peace and development is achieved.

For further information, guidance material, please visit the Global Compact website: [www.unglobalcompact.org](http://www.unglobalcompact.org)

Sincerely yours

Ms. Noha Chuck  
CEO

## ● Letter to SEBC partners

Dear EEN Members;

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Based on the previous facts, SEBC would hereby like to take this opportunity to encourage all EEN partners and their relays to contribute to the United Nations Global Impact Initiative and to realise its goals by committing to its 10 principles in order to exchange experiences and inspire practical solutions to challenging problems between the network members and to reach a case where an overlap between peace and development is achieved.

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Sincerely yours

Ms. Noha Chuck  
CEO

## ● Letter published on SEBC website

The **UN Global Compact** asks companies to embrace, support and enact, within their sphere of influence, a set of core values in the areas of human rights, labour standards, the environment and anti-corruption.

SEBC would hereby like to take this opportunity to encourage all partners to contribute to the United Nations Global Impact Initiative by committing to its 10 principles as follows:

### 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.

### Labour

- 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.

### 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.

### Anti-Corruption

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

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