

2018

UN Global Compact Initiative

COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT
2018

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STATEMENT: COMMITMENT TO THE GLOBAL COMPACT INITIATIVE

Two years from our previous COE 2016, Syria is now seeing the light at the end of the dark tunnel it went into due to the crisis that hit the country back in 2011, and is on the verge of a massive recovery and reconstruction era that is bound to see all sectors engaging zealously and relentlessly in the process. The positive developments being witnessed each day give fresh hope of revitalizing our role to advocate human rights, labour equalities, environment friendly practices and anti-corruption schemes as part of our contribution to the socioeconomic development of the country on the one hand, and our deep-rooted commitment to advocating the UN Global Compact Initiative, and creating increasing awareness on the side of businesses and the community at large of its main principles and the practices relevant to consecrate such ideals.

The last two years witnessed a dramatic shift as international aid to Syria moved from humanitarian assistance to socioeconomic development; a move characterized by supporting livelihoods, resilience and entrepreneurship as a means to mitigate the negative repercussions of the crisis and accelerate recovery and growth. This was manifested by replication and enlargement of vocational training schemes, delivery of nationwide business and management skills, and development and implementation of entrepreneurship support initiatives, projects and programmes funded by international partners working in Syria.

An active and trusted partner, the Syrian Enterprise & Business Centre was at the heart of the support process and helped successfully implement a number of UNDP, UNFPA and OXFAM projects and programmes that also served as a means for us to re-iterate and promote the principles of the UN Global Compact Initiative.

On a final note, I would like to take this opportunity to reassert SEBC's full support and utter commitment to the UN Global Compact Initiative, MDGs and SDGs, assuring that we will work as usual to make things happen.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Noha Chuck', is written over a circular blue ink stamp. The stamp contains the text 'SEBC' at the top, '2016' in the center, and 'SEBC' at the bottom, with a repeating border of 'SEBC'.

Noha Chuck
CEO
SEBC

ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED IN THE REPORTING PERIOD

BACKGROUND

The last two years and more specifically 2017 have witnessed great progress achieved on the front of fighting terrorism ultimately bringing peace to major cities of Syria, including Aleppo and Deir Ezzor. The defeat of ISIL has brought about very positive developments, especially in terms of re-investing captured gas and oil resources; something which tremendously helped bringing electric power supply almost back to normal. This was extremely helpful to businesses that suffered a lot of obstacles during the period 2013-2016.

In an atmosphere of public confidence resulting from bringing back stability to the greater part of Syria and against a backdrop of revitalized industrial sector that is working to boost exports, the government succeeded in stabilizing the Syrian Pound, which provided better grounds for doing business.

In the meantime, international aid to the country was shifting its focus to supporting livelihood, resilience and socioeconomic development through the design and delivery of a number of vocational training and entrepreneurship support projects and programmes that aim at enabling Syrian youth generate income and eventually contribute to alleviating poverty and reducing unemployment.

On the other hand, SEBC managed to become a self-financed institution and emerge successful given the obstacles and challenges it has faced during the period 2014-2016. During the past two years, it was home to numerous initiatives via its Business Incubator, a provider of management training via delivering and hosting training activities, and an efficient implementation agency for INGOs projects and programmes aimed at empowering youth to possess the right skills and start their own businesses that are bound eventually to support them and help contribute to reducing unemployment and poverty.

ACTION BY PRINCIPLE ISSUE AREAS

SEBC implemented and supported a number of major projects and community-based initiatives that generally contribute to human rights, labour and the environment.

HUMAN RIGHTS

UNFPA – EDUCATION FOR ALL

UNFPA Syria cooperated with SEBC to deliver its Education for All 2017 and 2018 programme. As part of the programme activities, SEBC has developed and delivered a curriculum aimed at training teachers on interactive learning techniques, while focusing on topics of peace and healthy lifestyles.

Delivered in 37 and 38 schools in Rural Damascus and Aleppo, respectively, the training managed through 6 and 5 training workshops in Aleppo and Rural Damascus, respectively, to encompass 133 teachers in Aleppo (98 females, 35 males) and 111 teachers in Rural Damascus (96 females, 15 males). The training dealt with issues relating to peace as rooted in the Syrian culture, its meaning and levels, and how the adoption of peace principles could very well help to avoid conflicts.

LABOUR

UNDP YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS OF SYRIA PROGRAMME

UNDP Syria has partnered with SEBC to deliver its Young Entrepreneurs of Syria programme which aims at promoting entrepreneurship by providing entrepreneurial training and seed funding to a sizeable number of Syrian male and female business and social entrepreneurs.

Following award of contract, SEBC designed and developed a special website: www.yessyria.org and uploaded its developed application form, to which it received over 200 applications from young entrepreneurs from across Syria. The applications were carefully assessed against an evaluation criteria focusing on the project idea itself and the level of creativity and innovation it enjoys, in addition to relevant experience, background and dedication enjoyed by the applicant.

The assessment process resulted in short listing 50 entrepreneurs who qualified to participate in the second phase of the programme, namely the first entrepreneurship boot camp in Syria.

Forty six entrepreneurs participated in the boot camp which was held at a hotel and resort on the outskirts of Damascus and lasted for seven full days, during which participants received intensive training on leadership skills, strategic planning, management, marketing, financial management, presentation, communication, among other relevant skills.

The final day of the boot camp witnessed participant pitch their upgraded projects to a 5-member jury panel comprising representatives from UNDP, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, and SEBC. Following an extensive evaluation process, the jury panel selected 15 winning entrepreneurs/projects to qualify for the third and last phase of the programme, namely Seed Funding and Incubation, by means of which each trained entrepreneur will receive 2 million Syrian Pounds (\$4,000) and three month incubation (renewable) at SEBC Business Incubator.

The project is now in its third stage which is expected to be completed by March, 2018.

THE ENVIRONMENT

SEBC continued its cooperation with OXFAM to deliver another awareness raising campaign but this time to school students.

AWARENESS RAISING CAMPAIGN IN SCHOOLS AND CATCHMENT COMMUNITIES/PARENTS

In a continued cooperation with OXFAM, SEBC implemented an awareness raising campaign targeting school students. The campaign aimed to introduce WASH to 4th, 5th and 6th Grade school students via a direct intervention composed of a set of theatrical and artistic activities targeting 65 public schools in Damascus.

The campaign was delivered with a view to highlight the direct impact of water on public health, diseases prevalence and hygienic status in Syria (Schools) and to build a sustainable mechanism to increase awareness of water conservation through involving the teaching staff to ensure the sustainability of the objectives of the awareness campaign and to obtain behavioural change that leads to more efficient use

of water in the community through involving the students in interactive and motivational ways concerning hygiene and water conservation and work on the impact on students' behaviour regarding the importance of resources and the need to protect them, in order to influence the members of their families and their society on the long-term.

In effect, 12,908 male and female students were covered by campaign activities, including also pre and post assessment tests to be able to measure the impact of the campaign on increasing students' awareness and positively changing their attitude to WASH and water conservation practices. The assessment of both conducted tests showed that the campaign has successfully managed to deliver over 30% increase towards adoption of best practices concerning WASH and water conservation.

Having acquired necessary approvals, SEBC is now in the process of rolling out same campaign to 35 schools in Rural Damascus, bringing the total number of schools covered to 100.

IN THE PIPELINE

At the time of preparing this COE, SEBC is in the final stages of starting the implementation of three projects; these are:

AWARENESS RAISING CAMPAIGN IN SCHOOLS AND CATCHMENT COMMUNITIES/PARENTS

The campaign is targeting to raise awareness of students in 35 schools located in Rural Damascus in relation to WASH and water conservation best practices. Once completed, this will bring the total number of schools targeted by the campaign to 100, and the number of targeted students to over 15,000.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN DAMASCUS, ALEPPO AND LATTAKIA

SEBC is in the process of starting the implementation of a 30-month EU-funded project that aims to deliver 9 waves of extensive vocational training and life-skills capacity building training to a targeted number of 270 male (60%) and female (40%) young Syrians aged between 18 and 35.

Delivered over a six-month period, each wave will receive training in one of three developed curricula, in addition to 24 supporting key life skills and business skills trainings. While the action is designed to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment, it envisages that not all participants would either desire or have the ultimate capacity to start their own businesses and contribute to creation of job opportunities. Hence, a portion comprising 30 beneficiaries would receive seed funding of up to 4,000 Euros/each and incubation services for an additional period of six months, during which beneficiaries will receive an array of services, including but not limited to mentoring, coaching, consultancy, access to information, office facilities, etc.

FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT OF INCUBATOR/ACCELERATOR - LIVELIHOOD AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY (LER)

SEBC has been recently awarded a contract with UNDP to deliver an immediate upfront feasibility study to assess the need for and scope the potential parameters for an incubator/facility to be established by UNDP.

As part of livelihoods and economic recovery initiatives, UNDP is considering setting up and funding an incubator-accelerator to support emerging entrepreneurs, in particular social enterprises. The incubator may serve as a stand-alone incubation mechanism or may be linked to a tailored blended financing platform that would support the portfolio's incubated enterprises. Among another potential service, the incubator could provide technical assistance, dissemination of sustainable technical models, design of sound business plans, access to inputs needed to start activities, and support in securing land tenure or other critical interface with the government and the enabling ecosystem.

In line with SEBC's efforts targeting the development of the incubation industry in Syria, the project will form a further step towards empowering Syrian youth and promoting entrepreneurship.

ANNEXES

LETTER PUBLISHED ON SEBC WEBSITE

**10 principles of UN Global Compact Initiative**

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 Compact 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.

For further information, guidance material, please visit the Global Compact website: www.unglobalcompact.org