

# Agulhas

Applied Knowledge

## Communication on Progress

October 2019

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## 1. Introduction

For more than 16 years Agulhas has worked with development agencies, governments, development banks, corporations and civil society to tackle some of the most challenging issues in international development and sustainability.

The company has a business model that works with trusted individuals to ensure quality. Driven by a desire to do valuable work and to participate in critical debates in development and sustainability, the directors have grown the company organically, responding to the needs of our clients, the markets where we work and the changing dynamics of the world in which we live.

Agulhas provides evidence-based consultancy and advice to help our clients achieve their objectives in a world of insecurity, inequality and interdependence. In doing so we commit to providing the highest level of professionalism, operating in compliance with the highest international standards. Our organisational principles, policies and guidelines have been established to help us do this.

Legally, Agulhas Applied Knowledge is a private limited liability company, wholly owned by its shareholders, who are also the company directors. The company was founded in 2003 and it is incorporated in England with the company number 4644326.

## 2. Statement from the Director

Dear Stakeholders,

Agulhas Applied Knowledge is pleased to submit its communication on progress for 2019, and with this statement we hereby renew our firm commitment to the Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption.

In this, our first annual Communication on Progress, we describe our actions to integrate the Global Compact and its principles into our business strategy, culture and daily operations. We are also committed to share this information with our stakeholders using our primary channels of communication.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nigel Thornton', is displayed within a light grey rectangular box.

Nigel Thornton  
Director

### 3. Our approach to the 10 principles

In the spring of 2018 Agulhas Applied Knowledge signed up for the UN Global Compact. This coincided with the company's decision to carry out a major reworking of our core policies. The 10 principles of the UN Global Compact helped inform these new policies, and will continue to make a positive difference to the way that Agulhas carries out its work.

Bearing in mind the UN Global Compact, we defined 5 major principles which we first ask all Agulhas employees to commit to;

**Integrity** – we conduct ourselves in a way in which we can be proud. We are honest with each other, our clients and ourselves. We provide challenge where it is needed and praise where it is due.

**Respect** – we treat each other and our clients, contractors and communities with respect. We take the time to listen to others, look for the best in people and strive to empower others to be their best.

**Openness** – we share ideas and good practice, and raise concerns quickly and deal with them fairly.

**Commitment** – we always bear in mind Agulhas' goal of harnessing knowledge and learning for sustainable development.

**Effectiveness** - We strive to deliver the highest quality work in the areas where we can use our skills to make the greatest impact. We will continually look for ways to do better: individually; together; and with clients, contractors and communities.

The second stage of implementation seeks to ensure that all members of our wider network of consultants, sub-contractors and suppliers also adhere to principles that are similar, if not the same.

All employees are required to read our policy pack, formally sign up to the Agulhas way, and return with comments where the policy can be updated and refined over time, thus encouraging future initiatives to be employee informed.

## 4. Description of Actions

The first major initiative which has taken into account the 10 principles of the UN Global Compact is our company policy which includes policies on the environment, labour, human rights and anti-corruption. We are still in the first year of reporting against this.

### 4.1. The environment

Agulhas have always had consideration for taking a sustainable approach by managing and minimising the environmental impact of our operations and services. We apply the waste hierarchy to our day-to-day operations and work towards having a net positive impact in terms of carbon. This includes offsetting carbon generated on travel and flights through Pure Leapfrog, the best provider of carbon offsetting in the UK. As a company that has to travel globally, we promote Green Travel by cycling or walking where possible, or by using public transport in the UK and by train to continental Europe.

In our London office, we recycle and use recycled products wherever possible and raise awareness within our staff and consultants to encourage sustainable behaviours. We source Fairtrade certified and organic, locally produced or refined products with a mind to contributing to the local economy and where environmental impacts have been taken into consideration. We consider environmental issues and energy performance in the acquisition, refurbishment, management and use of equipment and buildings. We purchase our energy from specialist providers of renewable energy (currently Good Energy).

#### Means of compliance

We are committed to a process of continuous improvement and will set targets, measure progress against them and where appropriate share our progress with stakeholders. We will communicate internally and externally on our environmental performance on a regular basis.

#### Measurement

- There have been no reports of environmental damage or concern at our business premises, or working in the field.
- In the summer of 2019, we decided to move to using all-environmentally friendly cleaning and sanitation products at our business premises.
- Two meetings that required long haul flights were rearranged to make better use of video-conferencing technology, a saving of 4,8t CO<sub>2</sub>.

## 4.2. Labour

Agulhas provides a set of standard HR Policies / Guidelines to its employees as part of our and their contractual obligations. These policies are intended to provide clarity on employment procedures and are available on the company Dropbox. They include:

- Agulhas – Absence Policy
- Agulhas – Employee Behaviour and Conduct Policy
- Agulhas – Disciplinary Procedure
- Agulhas – End of Contract Policy
- Agulhas – Starting Employment Policy
- Agulhas – Grievance Procedure

Agulhas upholds the principles of freedom of association and recognises the right to collective bargaining for staff members.

- Our London office is accessible to people with disabilities
- Agulhas complies with the 2010 UK Equality Act
- Agulhas is an accredited Living Wage company

### Means of compliance

The Equality, pay, recruitment and performance management policies are managed by the COO.

### Measurement

- There have been no reported issues this year which have indicated failures of labour standards or any reports of failures to uphold our stated policies.
- Agulhas is committed to encouraging a diverse workplace, and seeks to promote gender equality across all levels of seniority, with our senior management team having a gender balance of 1:1.

## 4.3. Human Rights

At present, Agulhas does not have an explicit policy on Human Rights. However, because of the international nature and scope of our operations, and the fact that much of our work is either explicitly or implicitly focussed on human rights, respect for these rights is fundamental to all of our work.

The company is committed to ensuring a culture which supports internationally recognized human rights such as those contained within the Universal Declaration and we seek to avoid

complicity in any abuses of these rights and take very seriously our duty to report transgressions of these rights wherever they occur.

This commitment has, however, been captured in our safeguarding policies, anti-slavery policy, anti-bullying and harassment policy and a very comprehensive set of overseas travel policies, duty of care, serious incident procedures and staff training for those that come into any contact with vulnerable individuals.

#### Means of compliance

All staff adhere to a strict code of conduct which covers adherence to these principles and these are also reflected in the code of conduct we set for sub-contractors and consultants. We do recognise however that our human rights policies can be further developed in future.

#### Measurement

- Agulhas conducts monthly reporting updates of any safeguarding incidents that involve or are witnessed by Agulhas staff or by our contractors. There have been no safeguarding incidents reported this year.

### 4.4. Anti-corruption

Agulhas has zero tolerance to bribery and corruption. This means we will ensure appropriate measures are in place to prevent bribery and corruption and that we act on upon all suspicions of bribery and corruption. We will always investigate and take disciplinary and/or legal action against those who commit, or assist anyone committing, fraud or any other improper activities in our operations.

From a corporate perspective, we apply the ISO 37001 Anti-Bribery and Corruption guidelines and have tailored the guidelines to fit Agulhas's organisational context demonstrated in the diagram below. We are seeking certification on this ISO.

#### Means of compliance

All Agulhas staff must immediately report any suspicions of bribery or corruption to a Director in accordance with our Whistleblowing policy.

#### Measurement

- No instances of corruption, bribery or accepting gifts/hospitality have been reported this year.
- Agulhas takes very seriously any conflicts of interest that may prejudice our work or expose ourselves to bias, which could be a form of corruption. In 2019, as a result of our strict Conflict of Interest criteria we have:

- Removed a peer reviewer from one of our reviews due to a potential conflict of interest.
- Removed ourselves entirely from participating in one review as a consortium member due to a conflict of interest.
- Another measure of our commitment to the UNGC Principles is through thought leadership, and this year Agulhas was part of the consortium commissioned to produce an information note on practices to tackle corruption and illicit financial flows in UK aid spending for ICAI.

## 5. Future initiatives

In 2020 our focus at Agulhas will be to build upon the policies that we have developed already as part of creating our company policy documents and see how we can measure our performance against these principles using robust metrics and measurement methodologies.

We will also welcome a consultation with all staff, given a recent increase in staffing levels, there should be an opportunity for newer members of staff to come back and comment on existing policies and make suggestions for improvements and areas where future policies may be required.