



96/3 Commercial Quay
Edinburgh EH6 6LX
Scotland, UK
+44.131.662.5160 tel
+44.131.662.6648 fax

mercycorps.org.uk

UN Global Compact: Communication on Engagement

Period covered by the Communication on Engagement:

From: 27th March 2018

To: 26th March 2020

Part I. Statement of Continued Support by the Executive Director

26th March 2020

To our stakeholders,

I am pleased to confirm that Mercy Corps Europe reaffirms its support to the United Nations Global Compact and its Ten Principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption. This is our Communication on Engagement with the United Nations Global Compact.

Mercy Corps is a global team of humanitarians, working together on the front lines of today's biggest crises to create a future of possibility, where everyone can prosper. Our mission is to alleviate suffering, poverty and oppression by helping people build secure, productive and just communities; through our efforts to achieve this mission, we remain well-aligned with the principles set out by the UN Global Compact.

In this Communication on Engagement, we describe the actions that our organisation has taken to support the UN Global Compact and its Principles as suggested for an organisation like ours.

Yours faithfully,

Simon O'Connell
Executive Director, Mercy Corps Europe

London Office
2nd Floor | West Wing
The Hop Exchange
24 Southwark Street
London SE1 1TY
+44.203.908.0170 tel

Netherlands Office
The Hague Humanity Hub
Fluwelen Burgwal 58
2511 CJ Den Haag
Netherlands
+31.70.217.10.80 tel

Geneva Office
5th Floor
23 Avenue de France
1202
Geneva
Switzerland

Portland Office
45 SW Ankeny Street
Portland OR
97204 USA
+1.503.896.5000 tel
+1.503.896.5011 fax



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Part II. Description of Actions; and Part III. Measurement of Outcomes

Mercy Corps works to build a better world where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, free of exploitation, harassment and bias. Toward that end, we have made it a global priority to assess — and where necessary strengthen — our culture, policies and procedures related to gender, diversity and inclusion, as well as sexual misconduct in any form. We are committed to creating an inclusive, psychologically and physically safe and accountable work environment where every voice is respected and heard. Getting this right is critical to achieving our vision for transformational change.

We support the UN Global Compact's Principles: in the work that we deliver; in the way that we work; and, in the partnerships we forge.

We have proactively **engaged in the UN Global Compact Local Network** (UN Global Compact Network UK), attending meetings related to the "Sustainable Development Goals Roadshow" and the "Global Goals Roadshow". These meetings offered excellent opportunities to engage with other UN Global Compact signatories and explore ways of working more closely with, especially, private sector organisations, in order to further our mutual efforts to support the Principles.

Collaboration is at the core of everything we do. We have created and strengthened **partnerships with private sector organisations** which are tailored to their unique objectives and support them to deliver more effectively on their strategies for corporate social responsibility. For example:

- Our partnership with **Twinings** improves the quality of life of the communities in their supply chain; in India we are providing essential water, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WASH) infrastructure on the tea estates where Twinings source their ingredients.
- Our partnership with **Shell** focuses on sustainable social and business progress, in particular looking to support vulnerable communities to climb the energy ladder through increased access to sustainable, reliable, quality products and systems.
- With **Zurich** we have partnered on regional flood resilience programming in South East Asia. We are working with Zurich in their Alliance 2.0 consortium to influence global investment in flood resilience, securing positive development outcomes for vulnerable communities and businesses.

We have contributed to the humanitarian community's efforts to enhance safeguarding practices, by **co-chairing the UK-Government sponsored Working Group on Safeguarding and Governance**. This work has been central to strengthening the overarching humanitarian community's ability to fulfil a Do No Harm approach, and reduce the likelihood of the vulnerable people we aim to support being exposed to safeguarding issues.

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The Principles

The UN Global Compact includes ten principles spread across four key areas. In the past two years, Mercy Corps Europe has carried out a number of activities in support of the Principles.

Human Rights:

Under the **Human Rights** pillar, the projects we deliver around the world continue to further our mission of alleviating suffering, poverty and oppression by helping people build secure, productive and just communities. As stated in our [2018-19 Annual Report](#), while our role as a humanitarian and development organisation in responding to the numerous crises around the world might seem obvious, it has been more essential than ever that we step up at increased scale, effectiveness and efficiency. Having reached 28.8 million people this year (2018-19) as a global organisation, we're striving more than ever to harness new partnerships, innovations, technology, ideas and improved ways of working to enable us to further increase our impact in many of the world's toughest environments.

Being conscious of *how* we deliver our humanitarian and development programmes around the world is as important as the projects themselves. It is our responsibility to ensure team members, operations and programmes do no harm to the people and communities we work with or put anyone, especially vulnerable populations, at risk of abuse or exploitation. We take this responsibility seriously and we continue to invest in and strengthen our approach to safeguarding. We are committed to putting survivors first, providing them with the support they need, ensuring transparency with donors and local communities, and taking corrective action. For additional information about **safeguarding**, please read below or [download our Global Safeguarding Report FY19](#), which provides an overview of our agency-wide approach to safeguarding, as well as our case numbers for our fiscal year 2019 (July 2018 - June 2019). As another example, we publish an annual **Modern Slavery Statement** on our website, which highlights the steps we are taking to ensure that modern slavery and human trafficking are not taking place in the supply chain that provide our goods and services.

Key policies relevant to this area are: [Ethics Complaint and Whistleblowing Policy](#); [Child Safeguarding Policy](#)
[Anti-Trafficking Policy](#)

Labour:

Operating in around 40 countries and with nearly 6,000 team members, the **Labour** pillar is equally important to us. Over the past two years, we have continued to improve the work environment for our team members. At Mercy Corps, we believe we're at our best when we bring the full diversity of our identities, experiences and perspectives together to tackle the world's complex challenges. One of our "stats" that we're particularly proud of is that 86% of our team members are local to where they live and work.

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Achieving this takes hard work and determined effort. Our multi-year **Gender, Diversity and Inclusion initiative** ensures broad ownership across the organisation and in our programmes, and has been an important part of our determination over the past two years to further improve the working environment for our team members. We are committed to strengthening our culture and identifying steps to building an even more inclusive work environment.

We are committed to the continued strengthening of our application, interview, reference and onboarding processes. We have implemented processes and procedures for vetting new team members including safeguarding-screening questions for both candidates and references. Team members who are terminated for engaging in sexual misconduct or exploitation are ineligible for rehire at Mercy Corps. We will inform any employer who seeks a reference or employment check from us that this is the case.

Key policies relevant to this area are: [Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Beneficiaries and Community Members Policy](#); [Sexual Misconduct Workplace Policy](#); [Conflict of Interest Policy](#).

Environment:

We acknowledge that our work to support some of the most vulnerable communities on the planet can also have a negative impact on the environment. When we work in remote environments, our work needs electricity, and in the most remote locations, that electricity comes from diesel generators. The aid industry is waking up to the need to operate responsibly amidst our climate crisis, and Mercy Corps' work with clean energy is positioning us at the forefront of this challenge.

December's [Global Refugee Forum](#) clearly called for more effective, sustainable solutions to displacement and offered an opportunity to showcase our **commitment to innovative renewable energy solutions**. Simon O'Connell (our Executive Director) shared examples of our [solar power and markets in crisis work in Uganda](#) in a panel with USAID, Mastercard, and Shell. Cecilia Ragazzi (Partnerships, Energy Access - Senior Advisor) led corporate partnership discussions and contributed to the Global Plan of Action for Sustainable Energy Solutions in Situations of Displacement (GPA) as a Steering Committee member. Finally, Emmanuel Aziebor (Mercy Corps Uganda), Nadin Dabbas (Mercy Corps Jordan), and Sara Murray (Mercy Corps US) hosted a webinar and provided a training to UN, Red Cross and NGO representatives on energy and gender in emergencies (featured in an [article on inclusive energy in Nature](#) magazine).

With all the clean energy activity coming up in 2020, it's hard to pinpoint one thing that we're most excited about - but we'll pick one anyway! It's our work to **green our operations**, through a phased approach that moves our offices from diesel generators to solar. This work builds off our global portfolio of renewable energy programs, in addition to an initial partnership with Schneider Electric and NetHope in Uganda. In the last few months, we have piloted the installation of a microgrid in our Mercy Corps office in Kaabong, Uganda. The microgrid is now providing reliable, clean and safe energy with a cost saving of \$2k a month.

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And what's more, we have had zero CO2 emissions in Kaabong since installation, which is a monthly CO2 saving of 1.150 tonnes.

Our focus on *both* programmes and operations helps us tackle energy issues alongside those faced by the communities we work with. Take Ethiopia, where we're working with Shell to electrify three refugee camps in Jijiga, Somali Region. By including our operational footprint in our programme planning, we've uncovered opportunities to green our office and increase productivity for small businesses (with eventual expansion to reach households). To enable this work, we're leveraging partnerships with industry experts including Shell and Total, which offer Mercy Corps access to technology, resources and expertise while enabling us to influence their strategies and activities in humanitarian settings.

Anti-Corruption:

Over the past two years, we have strengthened our Ethics team, and clarified the way that suspicions of corruption can be reported.

Integrity Hotline: The Integrity Hotline comprises two different reporting avenues. The first is an email address: integrityhotline@mercycorps.org. The second is [our third-party reporting platform](#) where individuals can anonymously report online, or by phone.

Reports can be made directly to the ethics team, which was formed in late 2015, but has been significantly strengthened in the past two years. The Ethics team now comprises investigators trained to respond to allegations of corruption (as well as sexual exploitation and abuse). In addition to the headquarters based ethics team, Mercy Corps has field Ethics and Assurance Officers in several countries including Iraq, Syria, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, and will expand into more countries in the next year.

Key policies related to this area are: [Anti-Bribery Policy](#); [Anti-Corruption Policy](#) and more information can be found about our suite of ethical policies here: <https://europe.mercycorps.org/en-gb/who-we-are/ethics-policies>.

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