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**Rescue.org**

## **COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT (COE)**

### **Period covered by this Communication on Engagement**

From: 2018-02-19 To: 2020-09-30

### **Part I. Statement of Continued Support by the Chief Executive or Equivalent**

September 30, 2020

To our stakeholders:

I am pleased to confirm that the International Rescue Committee, Inc., 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. We welcome feedback on its contents. In this Communication of Engagement, we describe the actions that our organization has taken to support the UN Global Compact and its Principles as suggested for an organization like ours. We also commit to sharing information about our actions with our stakeholders.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Miliband'.

David Miliband  
President and CEO

## Part II. Description of Actions & Part III. Measurement of Outcomes

Since the International Rescue Committee (IRC) was first founded at the request of Albert Einstein in 1933, our global team of more than 17,000 staff have helped people whose lives and livelihoods have been shattered by conflict and crisis survive, recover, and regain control over their lives. Our mission knows no boundaries. We work in more than 40 countries and 20 US and European cities, whether that context is a war zone like Yemen, a conflict-affected country like the Democratic Republic of Congo, a refugee-hosting community like Uganda, or a resettlement community like Boise, Idaho.

In our crisis-response, humanitarian, development, and resettlement work, we support clients in five outcome areas: ensuring safety from harm, improving health, increasing access to education, improving economic well-being, and ensuring people have the power to influence decisions that affect their lives. Across all five of these areas of our programming, we work to tackle gender inequality in order to understand and address the unique needs and barriers to progress facing the women and girls who represent the majority of those displaced.

IRC is committed to the ten principles of the UN Global Compact in the areas of human rights, labor, environment, and corruption. Our values, policies and practices are aligned with the UN Global Compact, as set out in IRC's strategy documents (Strategy 2020 and Strategy 100) and code of conduct (The IRC Way) and documented in our Annual Reports (see [Who We Are](#) on [Rescue.org](#)).

In particular, one of our core commitments is to the kind of principled partnership in action that the UN Global Compact represents – with the people and communities we serve, other humanitarian and development actors, governments, and with the private sector. To this end, IRC has built successful partnerships with the private sector that are based on joint problem solving by equal partners. Our partnerships are comprehensive, going beyond traditional check writing, and often include employee engagement, shared technical skills and expertise, knowledge and perspectives of the contexts in which we work, and building solutions together. Increasingly, our partnerships focus on big picture, transformational change in line with the UN Global Compact principles. Examples of active partnerships in the last two years leading to key outcomes include:

- Google's partnership with IRC on Signpost – a digital information platform that to date has reached over 2 million refugees and displaced people giving them access to critical information and services (Human Rights).
- Microsoft is enabling IRC's digital transformation to enhance our impact and ensure it is data-driven and evidence-based, which means better services being provided by IRC to the refugees and displaced peoples we serve (Human Rights).
- TripAdvisor Charitable Foundation has served as a critical partner that has supported IRC's programs across the arc of the displacement crisis. One example of a program they support is IRC's Hospitality Link Program, which prepares refugees for careers in hospitality industries (Human Rights and Labour).
- With Citi, IRC provides both host and refugee youth aged 16-24 in Greece, Jordan, and Nigeria with business training and start-up grants through the Citi Foundation's Pathways to Progress initiative (Labour).

We constantly work to strengthen our policies and procedures to ensure that we uphold our values and promote the UN Global Compact principles in our own work and with our partners. In this Communication on Engagement, we have described some of the actions we have taken to support the UN Global Compact and its principles over the period from February 2018 – September 2020.

### **Principles 1 & 2: Human Rights**

IRC serves the most vulnerable people in communities affected by conflict and displacement, people who are often at risk of human rights abuses. Recognizing this, IRC has developed policies and procedures to ensure we comply with our commitment to Principles 1 and 2 of the UN Global Compact. One key measure is the regularly updated suite of policies in our code of conduct, The IRC Way, which is designed to protect the people we serve and our staff. These policies include:

- Beneficiary Protection from Exploitation and Abuse Policy
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Adult Safeguarding
- Gender Equality Policy
- Combatting Trafficking in Persons Policy
- Institutional Review Board Procedures Guide for Researchers

In particular, over the last two years, we have significantly strengthened our safeguarding policies and procedures, updating our child and adult safeguarding policies and developing a two-year Safeguarding Strategy and associated action plan (2020-2022) designed to ensure that IRC's global approach is consistent with best practices, is appropriately and technically resourced, and institutionalizes prevention and response in our daily work.

We are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards and other humanitarian and human rights standards, including:

- Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- U.N. Secretary General's Bulletin on the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Beneficiaries

Consistent with our core values of accountability and integrity, IRC requires a comprehensive due diligence review of a potential partner or supplier prior to entering into a partnership agreement to ensure that IRC has a strong understanding of the organization's history, relationships, past performance, reputation, and capacity. The pre-award due diligence process enables IRC to identify and appropriately manage or avert any significant risk associated with a proposed partnership, including the risk of causing harm to the communities we serve.

We carry out annual IRC Way Days with all staff to ensure widespread understanding of our code of conduct and key policies and procedures, including confidentiality and whistleblower protections, and provide multiple channels for confidential reporting for staff; partners and vendors; and the people we serve, including phone and email channels run by an independent third-party, EthicsPoint, which provides anonymous reports to IRC's Ethics and Compliance Unit. We provide additional, specific training on a range of policies and procedures, including Child & Adult Safeguarding.

### **Principles 3, 4, 5 & 6: Labour**

IRC is committed to ensuring safe and secure conditions for all workers, regardless of position or location, and to maintaining a work environment that promotes staff well-being, equality, resilience, health and productivity. As set out in the IRC Way, this requires that staff:

- Treat all colleagues with dignity and respect
- Make employment decisions based on an individual's abilities and merits, not personal characteristics unrelated to the job
- Respect the rights of all individuals
- Provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities or special needs
- Reject any form of violence or abuse of power
- Stay aware of safety and security concerns, follow local security protocols, and stop any work that becomes unsafe
- Safeguard the confidentiality of personal information

Key policies and procedures that operationalize these principles include:

- Equal Employment Opportunity Policy
- Gender Equality Policy
- Harassment Free Workplace Policy
- Accommodation Policy
- Workplace Violence Policy
- IRC Global Safety and Security Policy
- Combatting Trafficking in Persons Policy
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Adult Safeguarding Policy
- Security and safety protocols

Expanding our comprehensive work on institutionalizing gender equality in our programs and operations, in 2020, IRC has elevated our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), forming a DEI council and investing additional resources to help ensure that our internal structures and program design promote representation and inclusion from all of our global regions, functional expertise, and racial, ethnic and gender diversity.

In line with our commitment to partnership, IRC also applies UN Global Compact principles to how we work with partners – and requires that our partners also adhere to the highest possible standards. Our Partnership Excellence for Equality and Results System (PEERS) provides guidance on working respectfully and mutually with our partners to meet our commitments under the UN Global Compact.

### **Principles 7, 8 & 9: Environment**

IRC recognizes the critical importance of a healthy environment to our global society, economy, work, clients, employees, donors, and other stakeholders. We are committed to strong environmental stewardship in our operations and programming in all of the countries in which we work, including headquarters and representative offices demonstrated by the inclusion of mitigating the impact of climate change through our programs and operations as a goal of Strategy 100 and as a part of our organizational mission. IRC operates with respect for the environment by

conserving and protecting natural resources, working to minimize environmental hazards, and responsibly managing energy usage.

We recognize that humanitarian programs can have a range of effects on the environment, both negative and positive, and we work to ensure that the communities we serve and the ecosystems and natural resources upon which they depend on are not put at further risk due to unintended consequences of our programs or operations.

Our commitments are set out in the IRC Environmental Policy, which was revised and updated in 2020. They include:

- Providing a safe and healthy workplace
- Ensuring the responsible use of energy throughout our operations
- Using natural resources, including raw materials, energy, and water, as efficiently as possible
- Avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating adverse environmental impacts caused by our operations or programming where possible
- Acting as an environmentally responsible actor in the communities where we operate, and acting promptly and responsibly to correct incidents or conditions that endanger the health and safety of the environment

Further, the Climate Change Action Plan in IRC's new Strategy 100 identifies key programmatic and operational goals to contribute to the global efforts of mitigating climate change and its impacts on the people we serve and in the geographies in which we work, particularly as a driver of displacement.

### **Principle 10: Anti-Corruption**

To achieve our mission, IRC must remain uncompromised and efficient in carrying out its work and act as a responsible global citizen. Our interactions with governments, regulators, donors, partners, vendors, the media, and the people we serve must be grounded on honesty, trust, and fairness. We support the legitimate rule of law and will do our part to promote high ethical standards in the countries and communities where we work. Our commitment to working against corruption is set out in The IRC Way and operationalized in a series of policies, procedures, and protocols, including:

- Fiscal Integrity Policy
- Organizational Gift Solicitation and Acceptance Policy
- Open Information Policy
- Supply Chain (Procurement) Standard Operating Procedures
- Finance Manuals
- Conflict of Interest Policy for Employees
- Partnership Excellence for Equality and Results System
- Anti-Bribery Policy
- Anti-Money Laundering Policy
- Economic Sanctions and Anti-Terrorism Compliance Policy
- Export Control Policy