

COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT (COE)

MAHAK – the Society to Support Children Suffering from Cancer

Period covered by this Communication on Engagement

From: 01/12/2018

To: 30/11/2020

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

10/12/2020

To our stakeholders:

I am pleased to confirm that MAHAK- the Society to Support Children Suffering from Cancer 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 this information with our stakeholders using our primary channels of communication.

Sincerely yours,



Arasb Ahmadian

Chief Executive Officer

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

MAHAK - the Society to Support Children Suffering from Cancer is a charity-care organization established 29 years ago and continues since as an independent NGO exclusively funded by benevolent citizens concerned with the welfare of children with cancer and their families.

From 1991 till today, despite all the unpredicted and almost overpowering external challenges that MAHAK has faced during these years, treatment and support services provision for cancer-stricken children and their families have been accomplished with the best quality. On the other hand, MAHAK has strived to never neglect its role in advocacy and increasing awareness among the society about social responsibility and its sustainability.

As of March 2020, MAHAK operated with 847 paid staff and almost a thousand volunteers scattered across Iran, providing full treatment, research, and psycho-social support to all cancer-stricken children below 16 and their families who are in need of financial and medical support. This inclusive service has been provided to over 35000 cases by the end of March 2020 with close to 20,000 active cases receiving treatment and psycho-social support in all public and university hospitals throughout the country with pediatric oncology wards.

This report indicates MAHAK's related activities during 2018 to 2020 period as described below:

A) Join and/or propose partnership projects on corporate sustainability

- **Signing a three-year MOU with Giannina Gaslini Children's Hospital**

In 2019, MAHAK signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Institute Giannina Gaslini in Italy with the aim of thoroughly identifying areas and mechanisms of undertaking continuous improvement in treatment services for children with cancer and their families as well as elevating their satisfaction. According to this MOU, MAHAK Hospital's specialists will participate in training programs focusing on cancer diagnosis, oncology and bone marrow transplantation offered by Gaslini specialists.

Since signing this MOU, MAHAK and Gaslini have had various online meetings to exchange knowledge, experiences and achievements as well as analyzing cancer patient cases who have been diagnosed with Covid-19.

During almost 30 years of existence, MAHAK has always tried to exchange knowledge and experience with national and international specialists in order to improve the quality of the provided treatment and support services for children with cancer and their families so that all cancer-stricken children in our country receive state-of-the-art services.

- **Empowering other charities in the region to increase the quality of service provision for cancer patients and their families**

MAHAK believes that development and progress is possible solely through sharing knowledge and experience with peer organizations. Accordingly, during the past years of existence MAHAK has strived to empower other charities to accelerate the process of providing services to children with cancer throughout the country and beyond.

Nakvalevi charity is a non-profit organization based in the Republic of Georgia who is providing the families of cancer patients with supportive care. Major proportion of this charity's activities is undertaken by volunteers.

Upon their request, MAHAK has started to set a roadmap for this charity for continuous improvement of quality of care, patient safety and ensuring satisfaction of patients and their families from services received. This is a twinning project which is currently in the phase of identifying the potential capacity of voluntary activities as well as utilizing this never-ending source through systematic programs along with need assessment in the field of organizational structure and training courses for social workers and volunteers as an integral part of the project.

- **The 2nd phase of activity of the first non-governmental HLA Typing Bank in Iran**

As it was presented in the previous Communication on Engagement report of MAHAK in 2018, the first non-governmental Human Leukocyte Antigen (HLA) Typing Bank was inaugurated through an MOU with a private sector entity under the rubric of a social responsibility action according to which 5000 donated samples was planned to be collected.

This project was implemented with the aim of increasing the quality of treatment services provided not only for cancer-stricken children and their families under MAHAK umbrella but all patients in need wherever they may be. Accordingly, the second phase of this project with the goal of registering the second 5000 members has been working since 2019 and has registered around 4000 samples so far and all the expenses have been covered by different donors from public and private sectors. By joining the National Network of Stem Cell Registration Centers, MAHAK has shared its database with others which have resulted into 362 matched samples for patients.

Since the outbreak of Corona Virus, activities of this center have been altered in accordance with the comprehensive observance of health protocols mandated by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education of Iran. Up to that time, MAHAK encouraged the community to attend and register samples through saliva but since it is one of the most common ways of spreading the mentioned virus and endangers the health of donors as well as staff, this practice was replaced by blood test sampling.

- **Organizing a joint program with Tehran Municipality**

In February 2020, MAHAK has launched a joint campaign with Tehran Municipality and Shahrvand Chain Stores in order to receive one percent from sale of this stores in two weeks which was generated around 1.3 billion IRR meanwhile MAHAK was implementing a raising awareness campaign for childhood cancer. Moreover, designing partnership cards for the shoppers with different level of financial partnership was distributed in Shahrvand stores in order to encourage people to join MAHAK in supporting cancer-stricken children.

In the same month MAHAK has organized a meeting with elementary students' parents in order to raise their awareness about childhood cancer as well as communicating with them to emphasize on the importance of early detection which will led to a less painful, less costly and more effective treatment.

B) Engage Companies in Global Compact- related issues

- **Global Reporting Initiatives (GRI)**

As a public donation-dependent charity that seeks to realize its mission statement in a sustainable manner through its strategy and policies -- in particular to improve the life quality of cancer-stricken children and their families -- MAHAK spends quite a bit of effort on effectively communicating the impact of its operations with the stakeholders according to its primary principles of transparency and accountability.

In this vein, a primary responsibility for the organization to its stakeholders is to provide rigorous and transparent audited reports regarding past actions, present developments, and future vision and strategic planning. On the other hand, achieving established goals in the environment we are operating in depends on proper decisions implemented and measured by tried-and-tested mechanisms to determine the correctness of the trajectory adopted.

MAHAK joined the GRI community as a member in 2019 in order to study this standard and shift its reporting system infrastructure accordingly. In this vein, MAHAK devoted its 5th International Corporate Social Responsibility congress to introducing GRI reporting as an independent global standard designed to inform economic actors, governments and other organizations in understanding, communicating and measuring the impact of their activities on the three sectors of society, economy and environment as well as encouraging actors to adopt this standard.

We are convinced applying such a reporting system will result in establishing and maintaining proper international communications as well as enhancing effective communication with stakeholders in order to maintain their trust and confidence. Hence, MAHAK is preparing its first reports according to

GRI standards and measurements in three areas of economy, society, and the environment to provide a clear overview of how resources are provided and utilized.

- **Organizing a childhood cancer awareness campaign on the occasion of WCD and ICCD 2020**

In order to provide its stakeholders with qualified and updated services based on international capabilities and standards, MAHAK has become a member in various specialized associations including Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) and Childhood Cancer International (CCI) and has committed to promoting the messages and missions of these associations.

Since providing comprehensive support to cancer patients whose numbers are experiencing an incline especially in LMICs is practically not possible by community based organizations exclusively, MAHAK has steadfastly engaged in UICC organized campaigns, most notably the awareness-raising campaign in February 2020 on the occasion of World Cancer day (WCD) and International Childhood Cancer Day (ICCD).

MAHAK won the UICC's World Cancer Day Spirit Award as one of the 1100 member organizations of this union in 170 countries for the campaign it launched due to the success to engage a plethora of societal actors including artists, athletes, educational centers, business sectors, local municipality and governmental organizations. All these stakeholders were encouraged to practice their social responsibility toward raising awareness by spreading the message about childhood cancer and its challenges and difficulties.

- **The 5th International Congress on Corporate Social Responsibility**

Adherence to realizing its mission of supporting cancer-stricken children with the most qualified services and increasing their quality of life, MAHAK has always strived to engage different strata of the society. In this vein, MAHAK has organized different general and specialized gatherings and conferences to engage business entities in Global Compact-focused issues including Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). As part of our social responsibility and commitment to our stakeholders, all such conferences are free of charge and open to everyone.

In 2019, MAHAK held the 5th International Congress on Corporate Social Responsibility with the theme of "Planning Models, Implementation Models and Reporting Standards". From the inception of these conference series in 2011, MAHAK followed the goal of promoting the concept of sustainability through informing government, business entities and NGOs about CSR.

According to the theme, this congress was held in 4 parts of keynote speeches and three panels on planning models, implementation models and reporting standards. As a member of Global Compact committed to promoting this agency's principles, MAHAK devoted a keynote speech to the message of Liz Kingo, representative of the United Nations Global Compact, who presented her speech through video conferencing and pointed out the importance of membership and reporting in this organization. Considering Iranian businesses participation in sustainable development, all the

enthusiasts and participants in the congress, from various fields such as the academic sector, business enterprises and charities, were invited to join Global Compact and establish closer ties with the ultimate achievement of forming the Local Network of Iran to achieve global goals.

- **MAHAK's Corporate Social Responsibility Document**

MAHAK as a charity which has effectively and notably engaged business sector during its existence has decided to prepare a corporate social responsibility document in order to improve the level of cooperation as well as build a mutual opportunity and interest between two sides of an MOU.

Accordingly, the first MAHAK's Corporate Social Responsibility Document is under compilation and will be devised until the mid 2021.

C) Participation in Global Compact global and local events

On account of the fact that Global Compact has no local network or secretariat in Iran, we have no opportunity of attending local events at the national level. During the past 4 years of membership at Global Compact, MAHAK has strived to identify and participate in regional or global events as well as online workshops and programs with the aim of adapting Global Compact goals and principles in a better fashion to apply them in MAHAK's strategies, programs and operations.

D) Implementing and promoting the ten principles of UN Global Compact in the management and administration of the organization

- **Observing fundamental labour rights**

MAHAK is operating in a society affected by various unpredictable external factors of social, economic and political nature. Economic pressures have resulted in late payments to employees and service providers in practically every sector of the economy. In contrast, MAHAK has diligently, and even in very challenging circumstances, always been on-time with such compensation payments.

- **Undertakings at MAHAK to Prevent the Spread of Coronavirus**

According to reporting period of Communication on Engagement report of MAHAK ending November 2020 by passing almost one year of the challenging with Covid-19 pandemic, MAHAK's initial responses undertaken in supporting its stakeholders including children with cancer and their families, fulltime and volunteer staff, and the donor community. The most noticeable undertakings were defining remote working packages for staff, devising an online platform of message and document

exchange in order to establish direct contact with patients for receiving and registering their medical files and supporting documents, and catering to their requests such as psycho-social support by experts. More can be read about similar undertakings on the website.

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ogbl#search/nargeskashaf%40gmail.com/FMfcgxwKJTQrGTQmrVSdznKZbTIGgcZB?projector=1&messagePartId=0.1>

As far as our staff and stakeholders' health (community-at-large) is concerned, MAHAK acted to raise awareness about Covid-19, its symptoms and preventive measures. Proactively and voluntarily, it took a high risk management decision resulting in disrupting over half of its regular donation income by halting all in-person and face-to-face interaction with the donor community through temporarily shutting down the servicing of its donation boxes, closing the shutters of fundraising offices and delivery of commemoration stands.

- **Undertake initiatives to promote greater environment responsibility**

The Covid-19 pandemic forced us to attempt novel methods of providing treatment and supportive services which proved more responsible toward environment with the quality of services remaining stable.

In order to decrease travels to Tehran and prevent in-person referrals to the hospital, the following undertakings are implemented:

- Devising a new patient care method via national courier services throughout the country for those who are merely receiving support services (e.g. financial compensations);
- Sending medication to patients and their families via public transport all over the country after receiving and processing prescriptions on a messaging platform;
- Availability of MAHAK's psychological experts not only in all the wards and departments of MAHAK hospital with full preventive gear but also providing remote consulting psychological and mental health services to the patients and their families in the order of thousands of sessions.

- **Quality is an ongoing concern for MAHAK**

MAHAK is active in supporting cancer-stricken children and their families regardless of their race and nationality with 874 staff and around a thousand of volunteers and has planned and implemented its strategies and programs based on Global Compact ten principles and at a more comprehensive level, to UN Sustainable Development Goals in order to realize the 3rd goal of SDGs: "Good Health and Well-being".

Accessing to qualified, equal and integrated treatment and support services including psychological services for everyone as the main right of patients is what MAHAK has planned to provide cancer

patients throughout the country. All operations at MAHAK are implemented according to GC principles in various areas of human rights, Labor, environment, and anti-corruption measures.

To adapt its performance to global standards, to ensure that the public donations are utilized in the best way, and in order to have continuous advancements and improvements, MAHAK voluntarily participated in various internal and external audits by well-known and professional organizations.

1. **Internal:** As it is mentioned in MAHAK's Article of Association, the governance functions voluntarily and on pro-bono basis in order to avoid conflict of interest and since the CEO is a paid staff, he is not included in the board undertakings. In this line and for auditing the operational system and the way of spending public donations, Board of Directors has hired two professional internal auditors in 2020 to report the integrity procedures and processes to it directly.

Since MAHAK has always strived to promote the concept of collaboration with other individuals and organizations from various strata of the society, continuously providing the stakeholders with reports on the current status of realizing Global Compact principles based on its core values of transparency and accountability has great impact on building trust among them.

2. **External:**

On the path of standardization of its performance, as the first NGO in the world, MAHAK voluntarily had its Project, Program and Portfolio (PP&P) processes and structures assessed according to Delta Assessment model by International Project Management Association (IPMA) which is one of the most widely accepted worldwide standard models.

This standard has been designed to assess and measure the quality of the project management system of organizations. IPMA generates notable added value for organizations by accurately identifying the most important areas of project development and the proper measures to improve them.

MAHAK is the only NGO in the world that has volunteered and exposed its processes to this high-level assessment and achieved the third level of this standard in its first trial and audit. It should be noted that only 10% of the organizations which have had the same experience, have been able to achieve the third level of Delta model in their first audit.

- **Organizational Approach toward Anti-corruption**

As a charity based organization with 30 years of activity, MAHAK has strived to implement its operations with transparency and accountability. Accordingly, the governance body of MAHAK has zero-tolerance in dealing with any kind of corruption.

To prevent the occurrence of such cases, MAHAK has designed different monitoring and controlling points including the highest executive authority, governance body of the organization as well as auditors.

Such precise monitoring provides us with the confidence of being able to control any probability of corruption in the organization. MAHAK has been successful in managing and resolving the few detected cases in two steps:

- within the organization based on core principles of transparency and accountability along with provision of detailed reports for delivering to our stakeholders and adopting zero tolerance approach;
- outside of the organization with the assistance and guidance of legal organizations and when necessary, the formal legal arm of the state.

In the end, one of the important points which cannot be stressed enough is that all the achievements made by MAHAK during the past 29 years have only been obtained due to the constant support of the ever-growing family of MAHAK towards cancer-stricken children. We pay tribute to and appreciate all the benefactors and supporters who have the concern of providing the best medical and welfare services for the children with cancer and their families regardless of their race, creed, or nationality.