

COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT (COE)

Women for Women International



Period covered by this Communication on Engagement

From: January 1, 2019

To: December 31, 2020

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

March 31, 2021

To our stakeholders:

I am pleased to confirm that Women for Women International (WfWI) 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,

Laurie Adams
Chief Executive Officer

Part II. Description of Actions

2019 saw Women for Women International take a major step towards increasing the reach of our advocacy to global policy-makers and partners, including through new strategic partnerships and collaborations, and expanding on our previous advocacy work with UK decision-makers.

Relevant Highlights from the year include:

- Attending the 63rd session of the UN CSW in New York in March 2019, where we co-hosted the launch of the Beyond Consultations tool (a GAPS network initiative) and hosted an experts' meeting with the World Bank's Gender Innovation Lab, OECD-GENDERNET, the International Rescue Committee and the Women's Refugee Commission.
- Convening a high-level panel event in the fringes of the SDG Summit (during the UN General Assembly in September), with the UK Mission to the UN, Women Deliver, The International Rescue Committee, The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and Women Now for Development. The event focused on increasing synergies across the triple nexus – the development, humanitarian and peacebuilding sectors – to improve the realities for women affected by conflict.
- Becoming a member of Girls Not Brides, a global partnership of over 1000 civil society organisations coming together to end child marriage and enabling girls to fulfil their potential, and a founding partner of the Five Foundation, a global partnership to end Female Genitalia Mutilation/Cutting.
- We also produced and widely distributed the third instalment of our annual Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) report cards, in line with our commitment to share our contribution towards the implementation of the SDGs in countries where we work. We updated our online data platform that gives access to the latest data from our report cards. [Sustainable Development Goals \(womenforwomen.org\)](https://www.womenforwomen.org/sustainable-development-goals)
- We also provided comments and press releases on a number of key external political developments, including the UK's Voluntary National Review on progress on the SDGs and the International Development Committee's inquiry into UK progress on the SDGs and the Independent Commission of Aid Impact's (ICAI) review of the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI).
- Women for Women International has continued to work closely with networks and partners including playing a leading role across relevant networks and coalitions, providing us with strategic opportunities to raise and include the specific needs and challenges faced by the women we work with and to further consolidate our role as a policy player. We maintain our position as host of the Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) network and continue to work closely with the GAPS secretariat. For example, working closely in partnership with our country offices, we led three Foreign and Commonwealth Office funded in-country consultations in Afghanistan, the DRC and Nigeria with women and women's rights organisations. Recommendations formed at these consultations supported the development of GAPS' The 10 Steps: Turning Women, Peace and Security Commitments into Implementation report.
- We also have consolidated a leading role within the Bond SDG Steering Group and took one of the lead roles in the development of Bond's report on the UK's global contribution to the SDGs, specifically coordinating Chapter 5 on Gender Equality (Goal 5). [sdg5_progress_gaps_and_recommendations_for_the_uk.pdf \(bond.org.uk\)](https://www.bond.org.uk/sdg5-progress-gaps-and-recommendations-for-the-uk.pdf)

2019 was equally a strong year for our global communications work. Overall, we achieved 565 quality pieces of press coverage, including issues and mission, corporate partnerships and events coverage (a 27% increase on 2018). Key highlights included an article on the 5-year anniversary of the Yazidi genocide in the Independent; a blog by Zainab Ghobaniyi, our Advocacy Coordinator in Nigeria for Thomson Reuters Foundation about combatting violence against women; a piece in the Independent's Forgotten Women series about the impact of the Kasika massacre in DRC; an op-ed in The Telegraph by Rita Ora on her mission to help women in Kosovo, where she was born; and a live Sky News interview with Brita Fernandez Schmidt on International Women's Day.

Women for Women International – UK led the **global #MessageToMySister campaign for International Women's Day 2019**, building on the success of the campaign launch in 2018. We asked our global supporters to send a message of support to women in countries affected by conflict. The Women for Women International (UK) Trustees' report for the year ended 31 December 2019 campaign was used by eight departments across the global organisation to further their objectives around IWD, and resulted in 3,717 messages of support for women in our programmes (208% increase on 2018) and 1,629 sign-ups to the mailing list (343% increase on 2018). 15 of our celebrity ambassadors took part in the campaign, as well as 10 other influencers and 12 corporate partners, thereby greatly increasing the reach of the campaign for awareness-raising.

2020

Despite COVID-19, Women for Women International has continued to make great strides throughout 2020 using advocacy to transform the enabling environment for women's rights at the grassroots, national and global levels to drive systemic change on gender equality for the most marginalised women affected by conflict.

Increasing the organisation's profile, credibility and influence

We have continued to focus on amplifying the voices of women we serve through raising our profile, credibility and influence with key stakeholders, networks and coalitions.

Throughout 2020, as global events moved online, we were able to take advantage of a number of high-profile external engagement opportunities – with a focus on amplifying the voices and experiences of marginalised women affected by conflict, raising our profile and pushing forward the priorities areas identified in our Agenda for Action:

- In September, the Global Advocacy Team supported Women for Women International's CEO with her participation in the World Humanitarian Forum's online event which took place in the fringes of the United Nations General Assembly.
- In October, we were able to work closely with GAPS on a high-level virtual event hosted by UN Women and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), where the heads of both UN agencies gave remarks. We supported the Executive Director of the Women Advocates Resource and Documentation Centre (WARDC) – our national partner in Nigeria - with preparation and speaking points, and she referenced the partnership with Women for Women International twice.
- In October, we were also invited to partner with the UN75 campaign for an online event to mark the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Our Senior Global Policy and Advocacy Advisor moderated the event with high profile speakers such as H.E. Ameerah Haq (former UN Under-Secretary-General for the Department of Field Support) and Ambassador Melanne Verweir (Executive Director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security at Georgetown University and former US Ambassador for Global Women's Issues).

Women for Women International has also worked to engage a wide range and type of formal and informal partnerships to enable us to expand the scope, breadth and reach of our advocacy to maximise our influence and impact. During 2020, we continued to work closely with networks and strategic partners to advance our advocacy objectives. We have maintained our strong position as part of Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) and Bond. For example, towards the end of 2020, we joined other GAPS members to deliver a multi-country project across the network, using the [Beyond Consultations tool](#) to develop gender-conflict analysis across 10 countries and provide national governments and international community with recommendations to address the impact of COVID-19, future global pandemics and crises on gender inequality, peace and security. Women for Women International led this project in Nigeria and Afghanistan, working closely with national partner organisations, enabling us to influence policy and build our profile in both countries, improve our relationships across national civil society networks and expand our analysis and understanding of the context-specific impacts of COVID-19. The Nigeria report launch took place at a virtual event in February 2021, hosted in partnership with UN Women and the governments of the UK and Norway.

Disseminating the organisational 'Agenda for Action'

In March 2020, on what should have been the first day of the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women (which was cancelled due to COVID-19), we launched our [Agenda for Action](#) - a flagship policy report which sets out what we believe are the five key action areas that need to be prioritised by global leaders in 2020 and beyond. This was our first policy report of this scale and will be critical in advancing our advocacy globally, including by increasing and strengthening opportunities for engagement in global debates and collaboration with influential stakeholders.

This piece of work was to be our key contribution to the key political milestones and moments for gender equality taking place throughout 2020, including UN Women's Generation Equality Forum to mark the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and 5 years into the Sustainable Development Goals – but unfortunately many of these key moments (including the Generation Equality Forum) were postponed due to COVID-19. We did, however, successfully move forward with our dissemination activities digitally. We published the Agenda for Action [policy report](#) with an [accompanying digestible communications handout](#) and have used both of these to shape our global advocacy activities throughout 2020.

As the international community turned its attention to the global pandemic, it was clear to us that our Agenda for

Action was even more relevant than it had been before - we were hearing from our global colleagues and programme participants how the impacts of COVID-19 were deeply gendered and already clearly amplifying inequalities and insecurities. It was essential for us to highlight the continued urgency of our Agenda for Action within the current crisis – and the heightened needs of those already being left behind. We conducted a rapid analysis, including through interviews with programme participants and Change Agents, which fed [into an additional briefing situating our five key action areas in the context of COVID-19](#) and setting out a recommended approach to COVID-19 prevention, response and recovery that would truly integrate the needs and rights of the most marginalised women already living in some of the most challenging circumstances. We published this on 7th May – what should have been the first day of the Generation Equality Forum in Mexico City and secured [an opinion-piece from the Executive Director in Thomson Reuters News](#) and our Senior Global Policy and Advocacy Advisor [wrote a blog piece for Bond](#) which was shared as the top blog in their newsletter which went out to 15,000 inboxes across the sector.

This caught the attention of many of our key stakeholders, who agreed that marginalised women affected by conflict were being left out of many of the conversations happening at the national and global level around COVID-19. Throughout the rest of 2020, we continued to have ongoing discussions with decision-makers, particularly from within donor governments and UN agencies, to provide them with the evidence and recommendations they needed in this fast-moving situation. Notably, on Thursday 18th June, we were able to share our insights and recommendations – and fulfil our commitment to act as a policy convener, set out in the Agenda for Action, by bringing together key actors – by hosting a high-level virtual roundtable. This roundtable brought together around 35 senior representatives from across governments, UN agencies, civil society and academia to explore some of the key factors that are compounding the invisibility and exclusion of marginalised women in decision-making around COVID-19 prevention, response and recovery, with a particular focus on violence against women and economic insecurity.

We continued to contribute to and raise our profile among key stakeholders and partners via 596 quality pieces of press coverage throughout 2020, including issues and mission, corporate partnerships and events coverage (a 26.5% increase on 2019). Securing mission-focused media coverage in 2020 was more challenging than ever, with the focus of news outlets turned almost exclusively to the COVID-19 pandemic and domestic political issues in the UK. However, we managed to achieve 74 pieces of mission-focused coverage (a 4.2% increase on 2019). Key highlights included a comment in [The Guardian](#) coverage of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI)'s report on the UK government's preventing sexual violence in conflict initiative; an op-ed for [Stylist](#) on the impact for women in Iraq of the US-Iran conflict for Stylist; an op-ed for [Marie Claire](#) on lessons for the #MeToo movement from the Harvey Weinstein trial; a [Sky News interview](#) with Brita Fernandez Schmidt on the impact of COVID-19 on Women for Women International programmes around the world and an [op-ed in Thomson Reuters](#) on the publication of a COVID-19 briefing paper produced by the Policy & Advocacy team.

Women for Women International – UK led the global #MessageToMySister campaign for International Women's Day 2020, building on the success of the campaign in 2018 and 2019. We asked our global supporters to send a message of support to women in countries affected by conflict. The campaign was used by twelve departments across the global organisation to further their objectives around International Women's Day and resulted in 4,108 messages of support for women in our programmes (a 10% increase on 2019). 15 of our celebrity ambassadors took part in the campaign, as well as 17 other influencers and 35 corporate partners, thereby greatly increasing the influence of the campaign. The reach of the hashtag has increased significantly year-on-year, with a 116% increase in 2020 (more than 22.2 million uses in total).

On June 20th we hosted #ShelInspiresMe LIVE, a flagship community building digital event based on the successful #ShelInspiresMe LIVE Feminist Festival in 2018. The event opened with a plenary conversation between our founder Zainab Salbi and Annie Lennox, and included sessions with Basma Khalifa, Jasmine Hemsley, Tara Mohr, Christina Lamb and Soraya Chemaly. This event was developed in response to the COVID-19 lockdown and delivered in under two months. The event was successful in meeting all primary objectives: brand-building Women for Women International as a bold and energised brand; collecting marketable data from our key target audience to build our database; creating media opportunities to promote our work with women survivors of war; and building relationships with new celebrities and influencers. We also repurposed the content into a series of IGTV and YouTube short films, to share with our wider audience.

Corporate Innovation – The Change Agent Workshop

Over 2019 and 2020, we have continued to engage and galvanise partners in the corporate sphere via Giving Tuesday, International Women's Day and as set out in detail above, via our policy, advocacy and communications work. We have given talks at 25 corporates and participated in more than 20 panels. One innovative example of

our work with corporates has been the development and roll out of our 'Change Agent' workshops. This workshop provides a valuable corporate partner benefit which upskills and engages employees whilst also giving an insight into the Change Agent training programme. Following an initial testing at #SheInspiresMe Live, the workshop has since been rolled out to multiple corporates and partner organisations.

Part III. Measurement of Outcomes

Please use the box below to include the most relevant qualitative and/or quantitative indicators to measure the outcome of the activities described in Part II above.

- WfWI has given talks at 25 corporates and participated in more than 20 panels, including Change Agent workshops
- #MessageToMySister campaign: In 2019, 12 corporate partners participated in the awareness raising campaign. In 2020, 35 corporate partners participated.
- Produced and widely distributed the third instalment of our annual Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) report cards, in line with our commitment to share our contribution towards the implementation of the SDGs in countries where we work. We updated our online data platform that gives access to the latest data from our report cards. [Sustainable Development Goals \(womenforwomen.org\)](https://womenforwomen.org)
- In October, we were able to work closely with GAPS on a high-level virtual event hosted by UN Women and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), where the heads of both UN agencies gave remarks.
- In October, we were also invited to partner with the UN75 campaign for an online event to mark the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325
- In March 2020, we launched our [Agenda for Action](#) - a flagship policy report which sets out what we believe are the five key action areas that need to be prioritised by global leaders in 2020 and beyond. This was our first policy report of this scale and will be critical in advancing our advocacy globally, including by increasing and strengthening opportunities for engagement in global debates and collaboration with influential stakeholders.