

28 May 2021

Communication of Engagement (COE) - BBC Media Action

To our stakeholders:

I would like to take this opportunity to renew BBC Media Action's commitment to the United Nations Global Compact and its Ten Principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment, and Anti-Corruption.

In this Communication of Engagement, we describe the actions that our organisation has taken in support of the UN Global Compact and its Principles in the period August 2018-May 2021. This report covers both actions at an organisational level, and outcomes we have seen through our project work.

We welcome any feedback from our stakeholders. More information about our work can be found on our [website](#) and in [our annual reports](#).

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Nursey
Chief Executive Officer
BBC Media Action

Introduction

BBC Media Action is the BBC's international development organisation, and we believe in the power of media and communication for good. Our vision is of a world where informed and empowered people live in healthy, resilient and inclusive communities. With our partners we reach millions through creative communication and trusted media, helping people have their say, understand their rights, responsibilities and each other, and take action to transform their own lives.

We work in more than 20 countries around the world, and in 2020/21, our projects and programmes reached more than 130 million people facing poverty, inequality and insecurity with information they trust, helping to improve health, bridge divides, challenge prejudice, and save and change lives.

We follow the editorial standards and values of the BBC, and we rely on funding from donors and partners to carry out our work.

We work with a wide variety of partners, and are proud to have a number of funding partnerships, learning collaborations and engagement with UN organisations, including UN Women, Unicef, UNDP, UNHCR, UNOPS, the UN University Gender and Health Hub, and the World Food Programme.

Principles 1 and 2: Actions in respect of human rights, including safeguarding

In line with our values, BBC Media Action seeks to act with integrity, to be transparent and accountable and to put the best interests of people first in all that we do.

Much of our work addresses issues of human rights. Themes of gender equality and social inclusion cut across all of our projects and programmes in 24 countries. We work to change attitudes on child marriage in Bangladesh; promote child rights and safeguarding in Nepal; dispel myths and challenge norms through our work on sexual and reproductive rights and health in Myanmar, Zambia and South Sudan; promote children's right to education in South Sudan and Sierra Leone; examine the rights of migrants through programmes in Cambodia, Myanmar and Ethiopia; and promote the rights to water, sanitation and hygiene in our work in India and through our global pandemic response. Engagement with the private sector includes our work through the FCDO- and Unilever-funded Hygiene Behaviour Change Coalition on water, sanitation and hygiene promotion in Afghanistan and Somalia, and our work funded by the H&M Foundation in India addressing the rights of informal waste pickers. We also promote our work in these and other areas through our relationships in our [Corporate Leaders Group](#), our partnership in [Business Fights Poverty](#) and across the wider BBC.

Across our work and our global organisation, we do not tolerate any form of abuse, sexual or otherwise, or behaviour which puts people at risk of harm.

BBC Media Action has numerous policies in place to protect children and vulnerable people, including a safeguarding policy, whistleblowing policy, staff code of conduct, safe recruitment guide, a standard operating procedure on reporting, risk-mapping documents for safeguarding for each of our countries of operation, and the BBC editorial guidelines with specific sections on informed consent, respect, working with children and vulnerable adults, privacy, harm and offence. We also follow the BBC's bullying and harassment policy.

Each BBC Media Action country office has a local staff handbook which clearly states that bullying, harassment and sexual harassment and abuse will not be tolerated; all new staff and freelancers receive mandatory training, staff undergo refresher training every three years, and there are regular organisation-wide reminders of expectations. We maintain a confidential reporting log of safeguarding issues, with clear investigation and disciplinary procedures, and we report any relevant cases to the UK's Charity Commission.

Our interaction and work with our partners - as with everyone we interact with in the course of our work - is guided by our safeguarding policies. BBC Media Action conducts rigorous due diligence on project partners to ensure they have adequate safeguarding arrangements in place and to identify any capacity needs. We provide safeguarding training for local partner staff whenever this may be needed. Larger-scale partners are contracted using BBC Media Action's partner code of ethics which clearly sets out the standards expected under the UN Global Compact.

Principles 3, 4, 5 and 6: Actions in respect of labour and ethical trading

BBC Media Action subscribes to the [BBC's Code of Ethical Trading Policy](#) which enshrines all principles of the Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code and reflects international standards set out in the ILO conventions. All staff must sign a Declaration of Personal Interests when they join BBC Media Action.

We are supportive of the [BBC's Modern Slavery Statement](#) and run our organisation responsibly, maintaining a high standard of ethical trade practices.

BBC Media Action works in line with the BBC's commitments to fostering constructive relations with its recognised trade unions. The BBC's relationship with the trade unions is guided by UK and European legislation, corporate level agreements, and employment policies. We recognise the choice of our staff to join or not to join a trade union.

Many of our projects and programmes address Global Compact Principles on labour. In Somalia, we have supported women to understand their economic rights and thrive in both the formal and informal labour markets; in India, we have trained health and sanitation workers to improve their knowledge and communication skills, while ensuring

they are aware of their rights to safe, secure, meaningful employment; and in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Myanmar, we have run projects addressing human trafficking, safe and responsible migration and mobility, and alternatives to migration. We have supported audience including with tips for finding employment or starting a business.

Principles 7, 8 and 9: Actions in respect of the environment

The world's poorest people feel the impact of climate change and extreme weather most, and often find it hardest to adapt and cope. BBC Media Action's work helps people to manage the risk of extreme weather events and natural hazards, and to cope with emergencies. We help people to build resilience and tackle climate change by engaging all levels of society, providing them with practical information and ideas around ways to adapt and innovate, as well as public platforms for discussion, debate, encouraging accountability among leaders. Our work also includes the private sector through local-level partnerships with private media organisations and journalists whom we train and mentor as part of our projects, and through partnerships with local media which carry our programming.

In East Africa, our 28-month *Weather and Climate Information Services for Africa (WISER)* project helped 10 radio stations to produce high-quality programmes to meet audiences' needs for weather and climate information, and encourage them to take action to adapt – such as changing planting or harvesting practices. We also trained local journalists and experts to communicate effectively on these subjects. Listeners reported improved understanding of how to plan to minimise weather impacts on their livelihoods; journalists reported increased understanding weather forecasts and scientific terminology, and scientists reported stronger links with journalists and greater trust in media.

In Indonesia, our digital content on climate change and green growth, produced through our *Kembali Ke Hutan* (Return to the Forest) programme, has engaged young Indonesians on issues of sustainable development through popular social media platforms. Our TV drama is due to broadcast on Indonesia's second-largest channel later in 2021.

In Cambodia, we have conducted extensive research into understanding, impact and adaptation around climate change. Our project with UN Women involved in-depth, participatory research in Kampot and Pursat provinces to understand how women and men are affected by climate change, the actions they are taking to respond, and how their decision-making is influenced by prevailing gender norms. We found that women in rural Cambodia are motivated to take action but are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and need more economic power, hands-on experience, tailored information and stronger support networks.

We are also working with Stockholm International Peace Research Institute to document the role of media and communication in addressing issues around conflict and climate. This has included analysing 10 years of BBC Media Action climate and governance data and presenting detailed case studies of our work to inform an overall report around conflict and climate, to be launched in early 2022.

As an organisation, we also recognise our own impact on the environment. We are committed to minimising the negative impacts of our offices and activities, to meeting or exceeding all known environmental compliance obligations in the countries where we work, to working with our partners to help inform their environmental actions, and to develop new systems and strategies to improve our environmental performance, with a vision of having net zero emissions as soon as practically possible.

We are taking all possible practical measures to minimise our environmental impact, for instance, minimising our business travel; minimising waste and maximising recycling, including minimising our use of paper and single-use plastics; using sustainable energy in our UK offices and examining our practices on use of energy, water and other natural resources, and wherever possible procuring goods and services which are environmentally responsible whilst also representing good value for money. We are embarking on measurement of our carbon footprint in order to set and regularly review our performance targets.

Principle 10: Action in respect of anti-corruption

BBC Media Action operates a zero-tolerance approach to bribery and has rolled out extensive anti-bribery training across its country offices. A whistleblowing policy provides a channel outside reporting lines to report any concerns with corruption and an independent Assurance and Risk function consisting of an Assurance and Risk Manager and an Auditor, reports directly to a Finance and Audit Committee made up of Trustees. This function provides advice, identifies risks, evaluates and improves effectiveness of internal controls and works to the Institute of Internal Auditors' standards. Staff are made aware of relevant procedures around the reporting of fraud and counter terrorism finance to donors.

Robust, trusted independent media can play a key role in driving accountability and tackling corruption and around the world. We work to further this by training local journalists and media organisations according to the editorial standards of the BBC. In some instances, our work directly tackle corruption issues. In Nigeria, our UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office-funded Security and Justice Reform Project engaged directly with the public and police and security forces to tackle corruption issues and begin to look at what an 'ideal' police force might entail. In Zambia and Sierra Leone, we have worked directly with media and government stakeholders on self-regulatory processes for the media as a step toward higher-quality, trusted reporting which is capable of holding authorities to account. In Zambia, we have also worked with local private news organisations to set up and train investigative units tackling major issues including corruption ahead of expected national elections.

For more details on this and other aspects of our work, please see bbcmediaaction.org.

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