Social Development Direct

Communication on Progress (COP)

July 2021

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Statement of Commitment

Re: SDDirect's support for the UN Global Compact

Statement of Commitment

Social Development Direct is a leading provider of high-quality, innovative, and expert social development assistance and research services. We strive to achieve sustainable impact by working with partners to advance policies, laws, social norms, and institutions that work for everyone.

Since joining Social Development Direct in October 2020 as Managing Director, I have convened a process to reflect on and restate our core values. In a volatile world that is being reshaped by multiple challenges, including climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and persistent social and economic inequalities, it remains vital that we hold ourselves accountable for both the work we do and how we do it.

Our core value of Social Justice commits us to putting gender equality and social inclusion at the heart of everything we do. We strive for a more just, inclusive, and sustainable world where everyone can realise their human rights and participate fully in social, economic, and political life, in line with the principles of feminism and racial justice.

Our values also commit us to conducting our work with Trust and Integrity. Relationships of trust are fundamental to the way we work. We build trust by nurturing a culture of openness, inclusive dialogue, respect, and accountability. We hold ourselves and partners to the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct, non-discrimination and safeguarding.

Social Development Direct remains committed to the United Nations Global Compact and its ten principles. The following Communication on Progress describes the ways in which the principles have been embedded into our projects and our day-to-day operations over the past year.

Sue Griffiths

Managing Director

The UN Global Compact Universal Principles Human Rights Principles

Human Rights Principles

Principle 1: Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and

Principle 2: Make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses Labour Principles.

Labour Principles

Principle 3: Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.

Principle 4: The elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour.

Principle 5: The effective abolition of child labour; and

Principle 6: The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation Environment Principles

Environmental Principles

Principle 7: Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges.

Principle 8: Undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility.

Principle 9: Encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies Anti-Corruption Principles, and

Anti-Corruption Principles

Principle 10: Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

The Sustainable Development Goals

https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/

1. Human Rights Principles

- Principle 1: Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights
- Principle 2: Make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses

1.1 Assessment, policy, and goals

SDDirect work with clients to provide expertise on gender equality and social inclusion through research, evidence and learning, evaluation, technical assistance and programme design, delivery, and monitoring.

SDDirect is committed to an inclusive workplace that embraces and promotes diversity and equal opportunity. We value and respect the unique contributions of people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. We leverage this to enhance our understanding of the needs of our customers and provide innovative solutions and exceptional delivery.

SDDirect believes in treating people with respect and dignity as an individual and as part of this, we do not tolerate unlawful acts of discrimination. Our expectations are articulated in the Code of Conduct. We have in place a Safeguarding Policy, which sets out our commitment to the safety and rights of all individuals regardless of their gender, age, race, ethnicity, impairment needs or gender identity and intends that their welfare will always be the paramount consideration. In the delivery of its projects as all aspects of operations, SDDirect is committed to proactively protecting individuals from abuse with a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse. Our Whistleblowing policy outlines our commitment to upholding ethical values and practices and promotes a business culture that enables staff, business partners and others to feel comfortable raising concerns without fear of retribution. It allows for the reporting of concerns including, but not limited to human rights, corruption, fraud, human trafficking, slavery, health, and safety, safeguarding and terrorism.

1.2 Implementation

SDDirect puts gender equality and social inclusion at the heart of its work. Applying a human rights lens to all that we do, we work to build inclusive societies in which everyone is valued and empowered to make choices about their own development. Our vision of an inclusive society is one that respects and celebrates difference; strives for gender equality; and promotes equal dignity, active citizenship, and social justice for all – leaving no one behind.

Applying a social inclusion and gender equality lens to everything we do; we undertake analysis and research to understand systemic barriers to inclusion and participation. We are committed to tackling these barriers as well as other institutional, structural, and economic drivers of inequality and exclusion – including social norms that exclude people on the basis of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, race, ethnicity, social origin, migrant status, or religion.

Last year's upswell in popular protest, solidarity, action, and citizen mobilisation around 'Black Lives Matter' across the world reminded us that our vision of inclusive, more just societies in unachievable without action on racial justice.

Yet all too often in the realm of aid and international development assistance, issues of racial justice and anti-racism are not sufficiently examined and addressed.

This has informed the updating of our company values, which include *Social Justice, Empowering People* and *Partnership*. **These values have been incorporated into organisational wide strategy with** explicit commitments to racial justice, diversity and inclusion, and more equitable partnerships that challenge global power imbalances and inequality as part of SDDirect's business plan for 2021-2024. To make this commitment a reality in practice, SDDirect has developed an *Ethnic Diversity and Racial Justice Strategy* this year. This strategy provides a practical roadmap to enhancing outcomes across the organisation on race and ethnicity, both internally within our operations and externally as part of our work. Measures include:

Externally
- Integrate an anti-racism and racial justice perspective into our work on social development, gender equality and social inclusion by promoting more diverse voices in our work.
- Ensure alignment of external communications, publications, media content and messaging with our commitments and values on ethnic diversity and racial justice.
- Promote more equitable international partnerships by forging stronger relationships and partnerships with social development and human rights organisations based in, and representative of, the Global South focused on gender equality and social inclusion.
- Engage with the on-going dialogue and debates in the development sector, and with social justice activists and movements, around anti-racism, racial justice, and structural imbalances of power and opportunity.

Internally
- Strengthening ethnic diversity and international representation at all levels of the organisation, with priority to greater diversity at the senior levels
- Create safe spaces for dialogue, learning and organisational development on issues of anti-racism, racial justice, and ethnic diversity within the organisation (and with our parent organisation, Plan International UK, and others in the development community).
- Create mechanisms and spaces to listen to and act on feedback, concerns and ideas coming from People of Colour within the organisation.
- Include minority ethnic voices and representation in critical organisational processes and policy for a (such as staff panels for recruitment of senior leadership staff and our internal Business Health Check Group).
- The development of targeted recruitment and staff policies, criteria, and procedures to enhance ethnic diversity and representation (as well as forms of inclusion, such as disability inclusion).
- Nurture opportunities for young people from underrepresented ethnic or racial minority communities and other less advantaged backgrounds to acquire work experience and overcome structural barriers to employment in the development sector (including a possible SDDirect apprenticeship scheme)
- Develop and grow our consultant network, especially our Senior Associates and Associates group, to reflect greater representation of ethnic diversity (in the UK and abroad) as well as expertise and leadership on gender equality, social and climate justice form the global South.

- Develop mechanisms for wider staff participation in monitoring and assessment of Ethnic Diversity and Racial Justice Strategy implementation to ensure that actions are meaningful and responsive to the lived experience of black and minority ethnic colleagues.

1.3   Achievements

- We have updated SDDirect's values to reflect our commitments to ethnic diversity and racial justice.
- We launched an annual staff survey on race and ethnicity, to gauge sentiment and understanding of issues, and benchmark progress.
- We held an annual technical forum to examine how we address race and ethnicity in our technical practice, and how we can better support colleagues in the Global South.
- We have integrated commitments to race and ethnicity into our business plans, with explicit objectives on promoting diversity and inclusion.
- We have developed an ethnic diversity and racial justice strategy, including a roadmap for implementation of clear objectives with timeframes.
- We have actively participated in discourse in the sector on neo-colonialism and racial justice, including as part of external networks and providing evidence to the UK Parliament's International Development Committee Inquiry into racism in the aid sector.

2. Labour Principles

- Principle 3: Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining
- Principle 4: The elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour
- Principle 5: The effective abolition of child labour
- Principle 6: The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation

2.1   Assessment, policy, and goals

SDDirect aims to create a workplace that encourages diversity and equal opportunities for all. Keeping staff and consultants safe is an important aspect of this and duty of care is embedded in all aspects of our business operations. Our aim is that stakeholders of SDDirect feel respected and able to give their best. We are committed to transparency in all business dealings, including taking a zero-tolerance approach to corruption, bribery, fraud, tax evasion, human rights violations, sexual abuse, and modern slavery.

SDDirect ensures that our supply chain adheres to global best practice principles through due diligence processes which assesses companies of the Ethical Trading Initiative, Safeguarding policies, and application on projects. Our commitment to the universal labour principles is demonstrated by our Ethical Framework, Safeguarding Policy and our dedicated Child and Vulnerable Adults Policy.

2.2   Implementation

The wellbeing of staff is at the forefront of SDDirect. We are committed to ensuring that staff work in an environment that understands their individual needs and encourages a healthy work-life balance. Our staff have access to a 24/7 support service which provides free and confidential expert advice on a range of topics, including therapy and emotional support. Staff at SDDirect also have access to counselling sessions, should they require it. Line managers schedule regular 1:1s with staff and have access to helpful articles and resources which help them to promote emotional wellbeing within their given teams. In addition, SDDirect have benefited from Wellbeing workshops with the focus of self and collective care in the workplace.

SDDirect values the importance of feedback and thus works hard to create an open environment where staff feel encouraged to share their views on a regular basis

SDDirect ensures that the views of our staff are represented through several means including an annual (anonymous) Staff Survey, but primarily through our Business Health Check team (BHC). The BHC team consists of 6 staff with representative from each team. Its role is to provide an interface between management and staff through representing staff in discussions with management, regarding proposed changes to company policy and operational issues and raising issues with management on behalf of staff. The BHC team carries out the following tasks:

- Offering staff, the opportunity to raise issues in confidence which the BHC team will then raise with management on their behalf.
- Engaging SDDirect Managing Director as necessary.
- Providing feedback to staff via team meetings and individual contact as appropriate.

During this year SDDirect have also undertaken an internal review of organisational policies, processes and working culture in relation to disability inclusion, and have been working to implement various recommendations. The group will review progress at the start of 2022.

2.3   Measurement of outcomes

A companywide survey was conducted to further allow the business to monitor staff satisfaction levels. SDDirect were thus delighted to see that over 90% of staff are satisfied working at SDDirect, all staff felt aligned with the company values, with 97% agreeing that the company goals and strategy are clear. Over 80% of staff understand and agree the approach taken to recent budget cuts by the company. Other key successes included:

- 94% of staff feel SDDirect's response to Covid working and travel restrictions has been clear and supportive.
- With the move to working from home, 94% of staff are adequately set up to work from home.
- 85% of respondents feel supported by line manager to succeed and develop
- Over 70% of staff feel the company social engagements have been successful during the lockdown work from home period.

3. Environmental Principles

Principle 7: Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges.

Principle 8: Undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and

Principle 9: Encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

3.1 Assessment, policy, and goals

Social Development Direct is highly conscious of the impact its business operations and activities may have on the environment and is making concerted efforts to implement a policy, processes and foster a culture that sees environmental sustainability as of central importance to the work the organisation does. Although mostly office based, SDDirect impacts the environment through both its programmatic operations, including travel, and its position as an international development research organisation that can have a wider influence on programme and policy around the world. The company seeks to inspire an attitude where environmental concerns are embedded in the company's priorities and impacts the way the company works on a day-to-day basis.

SDDirect is a signatory and active participant in the UN Global Compact and as such is committed to the three environmental principles contained in the Compact. Whilst SDDirect project work does not focus on environmental issues, it recognises the importance of climate justice and environmental sustainability for gender equality and social inclusion. Climate change threatens to reverse progress made in development and exacerbate inequalities. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 urges the international community to "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts," recognising the imminent threat of climate change, and the detrimental effects it will have on progress towards other SDGs.

In the last year we have revised our organizational environmental policy. The policy was reviewed by a dedicated environmental working group set up with representatives across teams in the organization. The new policy has made the following updates to reflect the current level of commitment by SDDirect and equip the organization with the tools to further build on this area, both operationally and technically, in the delivery of SDDirect's projects and programmes:
- Strengthened out environmental policy statement to include reference to climate justice,
- Committing to a twin track approach of minimising our environmental footprint while integrating principles of sustainability into our development activities,
- Expanding our activities with environmental impact now includes other travel, investments, and consultancy work,
- Identifying how we can monitor environmental impact: programmatic, staff perception, office, and administration,
- Developing a workplan to detail aspirations for the year to come.

Beyond the policy update and implementation SDDirect has been actively seeking opportunities to bring our expertise in gender equality and social inclusion to the climate change debate, seeking to move beyond simply ensuring compliance with environmental legislation to being more proactive in our specialised areas.

3.2 Implementation

Responding to the climate crisis requires global action and cooperation. We work to engage with other organisations, networks and thought leaders across the climate change field to

ensure our approach is informed by the latest industry thinking and scientific consensus. We also aim to encourage greater climate action by raising discussions of climate justice with partners and contributing our expertise in gender equality and social inclusion to the climate change response.

Through our technical work we continue to engage in climate justice work, often mainstreaming this within our wider focus on gender, disability, and social inclusion. Our core team includes specialists on gender equality, with experience in climate change, renewable energy and disaster risk reduction (DRR). Our approach to climate change is grounded in structural gender power analysis and intersectional analysis. It is rooted in the understanding that the risks and impacts of climate change are experienced differently based on gender relations and social norms This commitment has continued into our technical work, for example, the Disability Inclusion Helpdesk, Gender Based Violence (GBV) Area of Responsibility (AOR) Helpdesk, Women Opportunities for Work Helpdesks have all produced briefs or guidance notes relating to climate change and disasters during the last 12 months, whilst climate change is a cross cutting theme across many other areas of our work.

Alongside our revised environmental policy, we have developed a 2020-2021 workplan detailing specific actions to ensure accountability to the policy. This includes actions such as holding staff-wide learning sessions on our environmental policy and wider climate justice work being done, continuing the environmental working group with representatives from across the organization and putting in place processes by which we can seek to measure the environmental footprint of our work.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided a unique opportunity to explore alternative implementation modalities the delivery of our consultancy services which do not rely as heavily on travel. The inability to travel in our work has prompted programmes to pivot to a combination of remote working and working through local partners and consultants, we have not seen this transition to considerably undermine the quality of work delivered and will be bringing learning from this shift into future bids, programmes, and operations. A further benefit of cutting down on international travel has been to empower local and regional consultants and reduce our international consultancy services being global north focused - develop a larger network operating directly from the global south

Our professional code includes the following recommendations for all staff:

Professional Code	
Printing	- "Think before you print!" culture – is it necessary to have printed copies? Avoid printing where possible. - Print on recycled paper - Print 2-sided and 2 pages to a sheet if for internal use - Print with draft quality unless for formal or external use - Include a tagline at the bottom of emails: "Please consider the environment before printing this email" - Print in black and white where possible - Use online systems (e.g., expenses) and electronic signatures where possible to avoid unnecessary printing

Food and drinks packaging	- Do not accept carrier bags, napkins and cutlery when purchasing lunch, reusable cutlery is available in the kitchen - Recycle packaging as much as possible - The office has bought 'bags for life' for supermarket and stationery runs - Reusable cutlery is available in the kitchen - Encourage use of re-usable coffee cups rather than takeaway - Office fruit is sourced through a sustainable supplier
Office Equipment	- Ensure all computers are shut down and screens are turned off - Turn off electronic devices at the power socket when not in use - Ensure office central heating, heaters and fans are turned off and, if portable, unplugged at the end of the day - Minimise the use of heating by ensuring the office is well insulated - Dispose of office accessories responsibly - Use eco-friendly stationery, e.g., recycled, or paperless notebooks and biodegradable pens.
Office Facilities	- Ensure all lights are switched off at the end of each working day - Use energy-efficient lighting and equipment - Define a storage limit for emails to limit data storage-related emissions - To reduce data storage, where possible provide hyperlinks to documents rather than attaching documents to emails. - To reduce data storage, limit the use of email for quick communications or discussions that can be done over Slack, Teams, or a call. - Avoid unnecessary emails.
Flights	- Only take flights when work can't be done remotely - Consider longer missions in country to avoid multiple flights - Favour direct flights to flights with one or more stopovers - Consider alternate methods of transport where possible for travel with 300 miles. - Carbon offsetting where possible – costing into proposals where possible.
Other travel including commuting	- Flexible working reduces emissions from commuting - Cycle to work scheme - Prioritise public transport - Carpool when going to meetings
Working from home or remotely	- Conserve energy by limiting the use of heating and cooling systems, and/or maintaining moderate temperatures. - Keep lights off in rooms that you are not using. - Use eco-friendly stationery, e.g., recycled, or paperless notebooks and biodegradable pens. - Turn off electronic devices at the power socket when not in use. - Shut down computers and switch off screens at the end of each day.

Consultancy work, including impacts of programmes and policy influencing	- Routinely consider the environmental impacts of prospective bids and environmental track record of potential donors - Do not bid for projects that are environmentally exploitative – BD to escalate high risk clients/partners to EMG - Mainstream consideration of environmental sustainability and climate justice in technical work - Record environmental impact during project close-down - Try to partner with companies with strong environment records and commitments
Recycling	- Where possible avoid disposable purchases - Recycle wastepaper - Recycle non-organic kitchen waste - Compost organic office kitchen waste - Prioritisation of recycled products in purchasing office materials

3.3   Measurement of Outcomes

Although some of the below outcomes have been because of COVID-19 pandemic altering established working practices, during the period we have seen the following developments in pursuance of our environmental goals:

- Rolled out updated environmental policy and 20-21 workplan.
- Implemented and trained staff on the updated environmental policy.
- Research and seek to improve the range of 'green' staff pension opportunities.
- Ceased travel operations, establishing effective remote working and in-country partnerships.
- Home working has reduced paper usage and the emission costs of commuting as far as we can tell.

We will continue to monitor environmental impacts of our work in the following ways:

Programmatic:

1) Ongoing monitoring of impact on profitability of programmes where there is an emphasis on reducing programme carbon footprint. For example, remote engagement or more local consultants.
2) Consider environmental impact in to monitor how programmes have managed to minimize environmental impact.
3) When possible, seek to continuously monitor carbon emissions related to programme flights. CO_2 monitoring will be integrated into decision making processes and the deployment register. Emissions figures will be compared year on year to assess lessons learned and emissions against organisational revenue.

Staff perception:

4) Annual staff mailshot and survey to improve our environmental processes done to inform annual policy update.
5) Inclusion on questions related to environmental impact in the staff business health check

questionnaire.

Office and Administration:

6) Where possible given current office, situation track paper and consumables utilisation and encourage energy saving behaviours.

4. Anti-corruption principles

Principle 10: Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

4.1   Assessment, policy, and goals

SDDirect is committed to conducting all its business operations around the world in an honest, fair, transparent and ethical manner. SDDirect is committed to fulfilling Principle 10: Businesses should work against all forms of corruption, including extortion and bribery.

SDDirect's policy is to comply with all applicable UK (including but not limited to The Bribery Act 2010) and international anti-corruption laws and not to engage in any corrupt activity. SDDirect does not accept any form of corruption and/or bribery in or in connection with its business activities.

As part of its participation in the UN Global Compact we are committed to continuous improvement of standards and keeping up to date with evolving international standards of best practice.

4.2   Implementation

SDDirect has a clear anti-bribery policy which all staff are required to read, understand, and follow. All staff read the policy during their induction in the first weeks of their employment.

SDDirect monitors the implementation of the Policy and coordinates periodic training for SDDirect Personnel and Third-Party Associates, as appropriate to the risks faced by them.

All staff shall complete the following online training during their induction period upon joining the business http://www.doingbusinesswithoutbribery.com/, and this year we have rolled out a refresher training for staff to ensure they have completed this every 2 years.

4.3   Measurement of outcomes

SDDirect's Risk Committee monitors all incidents of corruption and reports on them on a six-monthly basis to the Board of Directors.

SDDirect is pleased to report that there have been no incidents of corruption alleged at the company from either internal or external agencies during the last 12 months.