



# Environment and Social Development Organization

## COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT (COE)

*[Period Covered for COE: July 01, 2019-June 30, 2021]*

### Part-1: Statement of Support by Executive Director, Environment and Social Development Organization-ESDO, Bangladesh

July 18, 2021

#### To our Stakeholders

I would like to take this opportunity from ESDO to reaffirms its support to the United Nations Global Compact and its Ten Principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labor, Environment, and Anti-Corruption through direct and indirect activities of ESDO.

It is my pleasure to submit our Communication on Engagement with the United Nations Global Compact for the time period of July 2018-June 2021. We appreciate any feedback.

This Communication on Engagement is a submission outlining all actions that different projects of our organization have taken to support the Global Compact and its Principles. We will be sharing this information with all our stakeholders.

ESDO's global strategy calls on implementation and collaboration to ensure the protection of biological diversity and ecological balance. We work with partners across sectors and recognize the importance the private sector plays to revitalize the global partnership for the Sustainable Development Goals. Our collaboration with the Global Compact has braced our initiatives, and we are dedicated to expanding on the work that is currently being done.

With Regards,

Siddika Sultana

Executive Director

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## Part-2: Description of Actions

Actions ESDO has taken in support of the UN Global Compact's principles during the timeframe indicated include:

### A. Human Rights:

#### I. Principal 1: Support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights

- ESDO always tries to support and respects human rights of its employees both in the manner of national and international standards alongside UN SDGs Goal-5 (Gender Equality). It ensures women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in top to bottom management. 80% of the staffs are female in ESDO with a great pride of such strong support and diversity of women empowerment.
- ESDO adapted a strong policy for Human rights and Gender Equality since many years. That particular policy has been approved by board members and also, works as a stand-alone statement to collaborate not only with employees but also with the partners and to ensure equal chance of participation without violating human rights of any involved parties.
- Through the ESDO's human right policy, the management provides health safety and mental well-being of the team members and also guarantees equal participation from all team members. Besides, all the project activities can never include forced labor or child labor at any cost/situation in ESDO.

#### II. Principal 2: Ensure no alignment with Human Right abuses

- ESDO is actively engaged in open dialogues with different stakeholders and community groups as part of various community led projects in remote villages. Under most of the project assessment cycle, it has been always monitored whether there is any scope of human right abuse or not in a very strict manner by the related designated team from management.
- The COVID-19 pandemic is worsening inequalities, and people who faced systemic and structural barriers to care before, suffer the most. Denial or lack of access to consultation for mental wellbeing, continuation of regular work especially for the team members who already get affected by corona

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virus is very difficult. On this matter, ESDO responded to the pandemic by working to ensure that employees get enough scope of flexibility and also, continue in work from home set-up. Besides to extend support for better mental health, ESDO encouraged its team members to attend online trainings fortnightly from global partners/organizations on Mindfulness, Positive Thinking and such topics, so that, they can overcome the frustration and lack of confidence due to this pandemic.

- Front-liners from marginalized communities are one of the most neglected sectors in countries like Bangladesh especially when it comes to ensuring hygiene maintenance to prevent the spread of COVID from workplace. ESDO involves waste pickers and their participation directly on its one major projects. So, to safeguard their health safety and hygiene while working, this organization distributed PPE kit (Gloves, Masks, Gumboot etc. to waste pickers of project's targeted locations (Dhaka and Rangpur) to initiate their maximum human rights in terms of safety and wellbeing in their work field.

## B. Environment:

### III. Principle -7: support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges

As, ESDO's major initiatives are to promote greater environmental responsibility for promoting a safe, sustainable, and toxic-free world, all the project activities are mostly designed to fulfil responsibility towards Environment. Since 1990 from its inception, ESDO has been working relentlessly on different projects like- ban polythene bags, lead free paint production, mercury free dentistry, eco-village, ban single use plastics, zero waste community approach, POPs Elimination etc. In association and partnership with international partners like- EU, UNEP, GAIA, IPEN, PSF, WAMFD, Toxic links, Zero Mercury, EC, UNIDO, International universities etc. , ESDO has been given effort to make people environmentally responsible towards building pollution free Bangladesh. Besides, In Bangladesh, the Department of Environment (DoE), MoEFCC, and other related ministries of the Bangladesh Govt. along with network of national organizations, INGOs, NGOs, CBOs is another key pillar of success in current project activities.

- Due to various reasons, whether natural or man-made activities, our environment is degrading day by day. ESDO has been constantly trying to create awareness and doing policy advocacy with the Govt. of Bangladesh on regulating ban on plastic items. Since 2017, chain of activities and awareness campaign have been commenced to pressurize policy makers to implement ban on Single use plastic in Bangladesh by 2023. This is one of the major activities of ESDO which is solely approached to save environment and meet the challenge of drastic plastic pollution.

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- ESDO's relentless effort and association with Bangladesh Dental Association (BDS) has resulted a positive impact among dentists on not using of mercury amalgam from dentistry. More than 90% registered dentists of Bangladesh do not use mercury amalgam and that is an exceptional growth to save human health and environment gradually. Also, everyone knows about the harmful impact of mercury added products on environment and health. ESDO is also doing advocacy with national and international authorities to ban mercury added product from its core in coming years. BSTI have set the limit of mercury content in skin care products at 1 ppm in accordance with Minamata convention due to ESDO's advocacy to reduce the risk of chemical on environment and health.
- Used lead acid battery has large environmental impact and due to the lack of regulatory framework, people often ended up throwing all these in open field. ESDO started working on ULAB in 2017 and did a baseline study in 2018. In 2020, the organization engaged in a pilot project with UNEP and Pure Earth on the ESM of ULAB. Activities covered by the project include an assessment study of ULAB recycling in Bangladesh, the organization of a stakeholder planning and coordination meeting, the development of a national strategy on ULAB recycling, and a comprehensive review of the Bangladesh framework. ESDO has already submitted a Country Situation report on ULAB recycling in Bangladesh to Pure Earth. It will be a combined report of ESDO and Pure Earth.

## IV. Principle 8: undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility

- ESDO inaugurated a unique and innovative project titled "Building Zero Waste Communities for a Pollution-Free Environment in Bangladesh". The goal of this project is Building a Zero Waste community model towards ending environmental health risks for community wellbeing, enhancing capacity building training, promoting community consultation, and expanding the circular economy in Bangladesh. Since the inception of the project in Dhaka and Rangpur, the impact on local people is remarkable. To encourage for zero waste lifestyle to gradually reduce pollution and initiate greener environment, this project's activities are guiding community people to become environmentally responsible day by day. Investing in Zero Waste programs and policies can create a good number of green jobs, in addition to known benefits of reducing pollution and improving community health in Dhaka city, according to a new study. If Dhaka were to recover 80 per cent of recyclable and organic material in its waste stream, the city could create over 6,000 new jobs in Future.
- Environment and Social Development Organization (ESDO) along with the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) carried out preliminary research on sources of mercury pollution,

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effects on human health, and the Environment in Bangladesh. The study was conducted under Minamata Initial Assessment (MIA), a project of the Department of Environment (DoE) of Bangladesh funded by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and Global Environment Facility (GEF) conducted primary assessment and awareness with the help of various organizations in Bangladesh. Apart from the research study, ESDO organized open discussions and national workshops to raise awareness about the use of mercury in products and its proper management as well with DoE and other relevant members of civil society.

- ESDO has initiated a project in 2011 to eliminate the use of lead in paint production in Bangladesh. In 2018, Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institute (BSTI) has finalized a standard for the paint manufacturing industry setting the limit of harmful lead content for household paint at a maximum of 90 ppm (parts per million) which make Bangladesh the only country with a mandatory standard on Lead Paint in South – East Asia and this standard was enforced due to ESDO's constant advocacy and awareness campaign. Every year since 2012, from 20th-26th October ESDO, has been observing International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (ILPPPW) by conducting human chain and round table meetings with Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead in Paint – GAELP. In International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, ESDO tries to raise awareness and promotes action to address the human health effect of lead exposure, especially for children.
- ESDO has conducted a study entitled “Synopsis of Air Pollution” from February 2019 to March 2020 on air quality monitoring and the major reasons behind air pollution in and Around Dhaka City as part of ESDO's continuous action research. The impact of COVID-19 on air quality of Dhaka city and rural areas has also been addressed in this study. The reason for this study was to create health awareness among general people and also to draw attention of the relevant authorities to focus on reducing air pollution related activities.
- E-waste management is one of the neglected sectors in Bangladesh and ESDO started nationwide awareness creation for 10 years to push for a proper waste management regulation for E-Waste. ESDO published two extensive study reports already to build awareness among the general people and also continuously doing advocacy to impose regulations in Bangladesh for proper management of Electronic waste. ESDO proposed a proper guideline to Govt. for E-waste Management in 2012. Based on that, a SRO was gazette from Govt. in 2021 for proper disposal and management for all kind of Electronic Wastes.

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## C. Anti-Corruption

### V. Principle-10

Whilst neither partnerships/associations nor programs have an explicit emphasis on anti-corruption, ESDO's internal policies, and thorough due diligence and ethical checks of potential partners, are in place to prevent working with individuals and companies who do not align with the Global Compact's principle on anti-corruption and bribery.

## Part-2: Measurement of Outcomes

As ESDO is mostly focusing on policy advocacy and research based activities for toxic free future in Bangladesh, most of the outcome for initiated projects are accomplishment based. Due to constant advocacy and awareness campaign from ESDO, significant accomplishments for sustainable environment and human health have listed below which shows the achievements in alignment of UN Global Compact Principles-

- Bangladesh Dental Society (BDS) in association with ESDO Banned use of Mercury Amalgam for pregnant women, nursing mother and children in 2018. Also with ESDO's intervention, Bangladesh Army Medical and Dental Core phased out use of mercury amalgam from practice.
- High Court Ruling on Ban Single Use Plastic Products in coastal areas of Bangladesh by 2021 to reduce plastic pollution to save Environment.
- BSTI has finalized a standard for the Paint Manufacturing Industry setting the limit of harmful Lead content for Household paint at maximum 90 ppm in 2018;
- BSTI has set the limit of Mercury Content in Skin Care Products at 1 ppm in Accordance with Minamata convention.
- Based on the proposed "practical guidelines for the proper management and disposal of electronic waste" from ESDO in the year of 2012 to Govt. of Bangladesh, an SRO gazette has published from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate change, Government of Bangladesh for managing the E-waste in a proper manner in June 2021.
- In February 2021, an SRO gazette has published from MoEFCC, Bangladesh to manage the reuse and recycle of Used Lead Batteries in a proper manner.

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