

Communication on Engagement (COE)

Period covered by this COE:

From July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2021

Part I. Statement of Continued Support by the Chief Executive

July 27, 2021

To our stakeholders:

I am pleased to confirm that the Population Council 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,



Julia Bunting
President

Part II. Description of Actions

In addition to incorporating the Global Compact principles into our internal operations and communicating progress following the COP requirements, the Population Council conducts applied research and thought leadership that advance the Global Compact. Germane examples from the reporting period include the following:

Human Rights

The Population Council conducts research to address critical health and development issues in more than 50 countries. Our work allows couples to plan their families and chart their futures; help people avoid HIV infection and access life-saving HIV services; and empower girls to protect themselves and have a say in their own lives. For example:

- In 2019, the BBC World Service featured our [Berhane Hewan](#) program in Ethiopia as part of its “[People Fixing the World Series](#),” highlighting how the program helped reduce child marriage and increase girls’ education rates.
- To support the Government of Pakistan’s recommendations for ensuring universal access to family planning, the Council developed the Population and Health Accountability Dashboard, a data-driven tool that enables provincial governments to track progress and set goals. In August 2020, the Council [presented the Dashboard to the President of Pakistan](#).
- In September 2020, the Council published a special issue of the flagship HIV journal *AIDS*: “[Reducing stigma and discrimination: Innovations in measurement and practice](#)” featuring research by the Council and partners on approaches to address stigma, reduce discrimination, improve access to HIV services, and halt the HIV epidemic.
- Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, under the coordination of our [Humanitarian Task Force](#) (HTF), Council researchers are producing relevant and timely evidence to support national health ministries, government agencies, and international non-governmental organizations worldwide to control the spread of coronavirus, evaluate the effectiveness of prevention and mitigation measures, and assess immediate and longer-term health, social and economic effects of the pandemic. For example, research conducted by the Council and published in a [new report](#) by Kenya’s Presidential Policy and Strategy Unit (PASU) shows the impact of the pandemic on the lives of adolescent girls and boys in Kenya — part of our ongoing partnership with PASU and the Kenyan Ministry of Health to understand the government’s data needs and to support a data-driven national COVID-19 response.
- A [VoA documentary](#) released in December 2020 featured our [Indigenous Adolescent Girls’ Empowerment Network](#) (IMAGEN), which builds on decades of Council programmatic research to strengthen the protection, safety, and resilience of Native American girls.
- Our [Evidence for Gender and Education Resource \(EGER\)](#) project launched the [2021 Girls’ Education Roadmap](#) — a first-of-its-kind resource that illuminates the state of global girls’ education to power evidence-based investments.

Labor

The Population Council’s mission includes a commitment to the world’s most vulnerable populations. In accordance with this mission, the Council ensures that a robust set of policies are in place to protect staff and program participants.

The Population Council's staff are required to observe a code of conduct to comply with all applicable labor laws, to ensure orderly operations, and to provide the best possible work environment based on best practices for all employees, volunteers, fellows, and interns. All staff are required to sign the code of conduct to indicate that they are aware of these policies, know where to locate them, understand them, and will abide by them. The code of conduct includes policies on: anti-trafficking of persons; bullying; child protection; close personal relationships; confidentiality of personnel information; conflicts of interest; discrimination, harassment, and retaliation; fraud and other corrupt practices; illegal use of controlled substances; misconduct in science; safeguarding; solicitations; and whistle blowing.

Of particular salience to the Global Compact principles are our:

1. **Child Protection Policy:** The Council believes that all children, regardless of age, race, gender, socio-economic status or cultural background deserve the opportunity to live full and productive lives and to be free from all forms of abuse. It is the policy of the Council to strive to empower children to reach their full potential and to keep the children who participate in Council work safe from harm. Our Child Protection Policy sets forth the standards, including a Code of Conduct, that our organization adheres to in such work involving children.
2. **Safeguarding Policy:** Vulnerable adults and children are the key populations with which we work. The Council has zero-tolerance for all forms of exploitation including sexual abuse, harassment, bullying, and neglect, and it is our policy to ensure the safety of and protection from such behaviors. We implement this policy through safeguarding measures, reporting, and monitoring procedures that are incorporated in our research and program interventions.

Trainings related to policies are produced by the Human Resources department. All-staff trainings are disseminated through an online training platform. These trainings are designed to cover both regulatory requirements and best practices and require staff to respond to a number of scenarios based on real-world incidents. Recent trainings have centered on workplace harassment.

As part of its dedication to equal opportunity, it is the continuing commitment of the Population Council to be fair and impartial in all its relations with its employees and applicants for employment. In all matters affecting, but not limited to recruitment, employment, upgrading, transfer, layoff, termination, rates of pay and other forms of compensation, promotion, training, salary administration, performance appraisal, and disciplinary action, the Council takes action to ensure that all employees, regardless of age, color, creed, national origin, disability, political belief, veteran status, religion, marital status, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation are afforded equal opportunity. Action is taken to ensure that no discrimination in the form of sexual harassment exists in either explicit or implicit terms.

In June 2020, the Population Council joined organizations around the world to condemn incidents of racial violence, police violence, and racism towards Black Americans and asserted our intolerance for silence and inaction. We made a commitment at that time, to our ourselves, our colleagues, our partners and peers, our donors, and the individuals and communities with whom we work, to look inward and examine what more we could and should be doing to create a more just and equitable world both in the work we do and in how we operate. That July, following discussions with Council colleagues in the US and our international offices, we launched our Agenda for Change – our commitment to becoming an anti-racist organization and addressing wider issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, both in our work and how we operate.

The Agenda for Change commits us to embrace anti-racist principles and actions; to build a strong culture grounded in diversity, equity and inclusion; to decentralize our global operations to better respond to the needs of the diverse populations we serve; and to ensure our evidence and analysis continue to influence those who have the power and resources to improve the lives of the poorest and most marginalized people around the world.

Environment

The Population Council's [Population, Environmental Risk, and Climate Change](#) (PERCC) initiative bridges the gaps between demography, economics, public health, and climate science rooted in principles of equity and equality. PERCC is dedicated to understanding the complex dynamics around climate change and population with a particular focus on intersections with socioeconomic status, gender, age structure, household configuration, education, and health outcomes. Evidence generated under PERCC is designed to inform both local and global policies and programs. Select examples include:

- A special investment by the Council in 2020, funded selected Council researchers to [initiate research on timely topics](#) such as:
 - a geospatial analysis on the links between exposure to arsenic in drinking water and adverse reproductive health outcomes including infertility;
 - analyses linking climate, population, and vulnerability data to explore gender differentiated adaptations to drought in Sindh Province, Pakistan; and
 - examining gender-specific vulnerabilities, adaptation, and coping strategies to climate change in Mexico and Central America.
- PERCC researchers have contributed to developing the socioeconomic scenarios of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – the Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs), and the quantitative projections of demographic variables in the SSPs. These detailed demographic data and modelling tools are considered essential input to IPCC assessment reports, and other global socioeconomic and environmental assessments, most notably the proceedings of the annual UN Climate Change Conferences (COP), and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- Council researchers, in collaboration with other experts, have published extensively on a variety of topics related to our PERCC research agenda. To cite just a few:
 - In December 2019, the Council published in [Population and Environment](#) the first study to document that rising sea levels in Bangladesh, and concomitant increases in water salinity, are associated with pre-eclampsia and eclampsia, a leading cause of maternal morbidity and mortality.
 - An April 2020 article in [Nature Sustainability](#) examines the role of increased educational attainment in relation to carbon emissions and the Human Development Index (HDI), an indicator that correlates with adaptive capacity to climate impacts.
 - An October 2020 [piece in Think Global Health](#) advocates how cities should prioritize inclusive urbanization to address health disparities.
 - A May 2021 article in the [International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics](#) examines how natural disasters may impact access and uptake to sexual and reproductive health services.

- A June 2021 article in [PLoS ONE](#) highlights the consequences that vulnerability of agriculture to climate change can have on child nutrition.

Anti-corruption

It is the policy of the Population Council that all of its activities and operations be carried out free of fraud and other corrupt practices. The Council has zero tolerance for all fraud and corruption. The Council upholds this policy by following guidelines in order to prevent, promptly identify, and address fraud and other corrupt practices that may occur in connection with the conduct of our mission, activities, and operations. The policy applies to all Council employees, volunteers, fellows, and interns.

On recruitment and periodically, new and current staff are required to review and sign off receipt, review, and agreement to comply with the terms of the policy. Staff also undergo ongoing training on the various policies and any updates made. The policy encourages employees to promptly make good faith reports about fraud and other corrupt practices in accordance with the reporting procedures in the Council's Whistleblower Policy. Those who wish anonymity may use the whistleblower hotline that is provided by an independent third-party provider.

The Population Council also employs several other measures to prevent and mitigate corruption: (1) Stringent financial management for thorough monthly review of all expenses and financial transactions; (2) Annual 'ethics training' for all staff that includes anti-bribery and corruption rules as well as conflict of interest guidelines; (3) Due diligence and monitoring for partners; (4) Procurement policies that ensure transparency and segregation of responsibilities on all stages of procurement (i.e., requisition, bid analysis, purchase order, receiving, invoice, and payment) and an enterprise resource planning system to monitor unusual trends at project, country, and headquarters levels; (5) Signing authority matrix to ensure segregation of duties and verification/approval by relevant staff for all types of payments; and (6) Subcontracts with partners that require compliance with our anti-bribery and corruption procedures.

Part III. Measurement of Outcomes

The Population Council utilizes a variety of quantitative metrics to document and measure the impact of our research. Highlights from the reporting period include:

	2019 (Q3-Q4)	2020 (Q1-Q4)	2021 (Q1-Q2)
Number of peer-reviewed publications	73	167	73
Percentage of peer-reviewed publications in top 25% journals in their respective fields	73%	79%	78%
Number of citations*	470	457	49
Number of media mentions of research articles*	196	64	49
Number of social media mentions of research articles*	2,601	2,049	2,778
Number of Council-developed products approved by the US FDA (cumulative)	9	9	9

Estimated number of current users of Council-developed contraceptive products ¹	170 million	170 million	170 million
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*These numbers will continue to increase over time as research published in previous years is cited and mentioned.

The Council also documents our impact qualitatively through our [annual reports](#), with the theme of our most recent (2019) report (published October 2020), “[Translating Evidence into Meaningful Actions](#),” and through a series of [Research Utilization and Impact Briefs](#) highlighting how the Council’s evidence is translated into meaningful action. Recent briefs have focused on our work addressing the [COVID-19 response in Kenya](#) and on [advancing global girls’ education](#).

The Council is committed to sharing our extensive body of research and data to advance evidence-based approaches for solving development challenges. We created [Knowledge Commons](#) as an open access institutional repository to make widely available the Council’s world-class research. Knowledge Commons gathers, indexes, preserves, and makes widely available a broad range of research content in multiple formats and languages.

¹ Excluding Annovera® which was recently approved and is initially available in the US.