



We will beat
leprosy together

Communication on Engagement (COE) with the United Nations Global Compact

Period covered by this COE: September 2019 to August 2021

Part I: Statement of Continued Support by the Chief Executive



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To our stakeholders:

I am delighted to confirm Lepra's continued 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 on Engagement, we set out the activities that Lepra has taken to support and engage with the UN Global Compact and its Principles over the past two years. We commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders, and we welcome feedback on its contents.

Yours sincerely,

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Chief Executive

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Parts II and III: Description of Actions and Measurement of Outcomes

Lepra's vision is a world free from prejudice and disability due to leprosy and lymphatic filariasis (LF). These remain two of the least understood and most widely ignored diseases in the world. Millions of people are affected, with numbers continuing to rise. If left undetected or untreated, leprosy and LF can cause life changing disabilities. For almost a century, Lepra has been working to support people affected by leprosy and LF. Led by evidence, our mission is to reduce the transmission of these cruel diseases and promote the wellbeing of those who are affected by them. Delivering projects in India, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe, we find, diagnose, treat and rehabilitate people affected by leprosy and LF, and we work tirelessly to fight the prejudice and discrimination they face in their daily lives.

As a charitable organisation, Lepra is fully committed to operating in a socially, environmentally and economically sustainable and responsible manner. The principles of the UN Global Compact are in alignment with our organisational values and are therefore embedded in our culture, strategy, policies and programmes. In particular, the first two principles – those which pertain to human rights – are especially fundamental to Lepra's raison d'être as we advocate for the rights and needs of people affected by leprosy, LF and related disabilities. Going forwards, we will continue to uphold the UN Global Compact's principles in all that we do and seek to encourage the organisations with which we engage to do likewise. These include our corporate partners as well as public sector and civil society institutions from national governments right down to community-based organisations.

Lepra is a well-respected and key contributor to a wide range of networks and groups in the international community, including the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP) and the Neglected Tropical Disease NGO Network. We share our knowledge and expertise with these organisations and our membership ensures that we are party to the development of emerging policies. These are also forums through which we promote the principles of the UN Global Compact.

Since Lepra became a signatory to the UN Global Compact, there is much that we have achieved that is relevant to the Ten Principles. Our [annual reviews](#) go into greater detail, but below, we summarise some of our key activities and achievements from the past two years.

Human rights

There are two strands to Lepra's engagement with the human rights principles of the UN Global Compact. Firstly, we are committed to supporting and respecting the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights in the ways in which we operate. We adhere to robust Equal Opportunities and Safeguarding policies that reflect best and current practice, both with regards to protecting children and vulnerable adults, and to treating everyone with respect and dignity, regardless of their age, ability, gender, civil status, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. All Lepra staff and volunteers are trained on these policies, and we cascade their application through our programmes, ensuring that our partners also adhere to them.

The protection and promotion of human rights for people affected by leprosy and LF is also fundamental to Lepra's purpose, and we work hard to challenge situations where their rights are ignored or abused. Lepra is a development rather than a humanitarian organisation so our role in natural and man-made emergencies is to ensure that the voices of the people with whom we work are heard and that their humanitarian needs are met. As people affected by leprosy, LF and related disabilities are often overlooked in normal times, this

risk is multiplied many times in an acute emergency such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, we therefore moved quickly to take action to support them and their communities, ensuring the continuation of health services and support wherever necessary, including access to COVID-19 testing and the provision of vaccination services in India and Bangladesh. In the face of global instability, we also managed to continue advocating for their rights and to provide holistic treatment.

As well as our response to the pandemic, Lepra has helped groups of people affected by leprosy and LF to claim various financial benefits to which they are entitled and to demand support where no such provision exists. For example, 'Restoring the Lives of Forgotten People' (RLFP) was a five-year project which ran until 2019/20 in the Samastipur District of Bihar, India. By the end of the project, 121,217 people affected by leprosy and LF had been reached. Not only were they provided with timely treatment and care for their disabilities, but they were also mobilised to understand their rights, access benefits and services, and advocate for gaps in services to be addressed.

Importantly, in many instances, as was the case in the RLFP project, Lepra has created the group foundations upon which people affected by these diseases can take their issues and concerns directly to decision makers, thereby supporting their demand that *"there should be nothing about us without us"*. In some instances, these federations or groups of people affected by leprosy and LF have even lodged legal challenges to government authorities, because they judge that they have been overlooked or ignored in the state's provision of resources and services, especially during the pandemic.

Another example of where we have sought to protect and promote the rights of people affected by leprosy is through our advocacy and influencing work. In December 2019, Lepra Bangladesh took a lead role in the organisation of the first National Leprosy Congress in Dhaka which was opened by the Prime Minister. This event was followed by the first national group meeting of people affected by leprosy, in which Lepra Bangladesh also played an instrumental role. This organisation now continues to help shape government policies and practice with respect to services for people affected by leprosy and LF.

Labour

Lepra strongly supports the labour principles under the UN Global Compact, and these are embedded in a number of the key policies that dictate the ways in which we operate, including our Equal Opportunities and Dignity at Work policies. We are proud to be an equal opportunities employer and are fully committed to treating all of our employees, prospective employees, volunteers and those who work with or for us equally.

Whilst not specifically geared towards labour rights negotiations, Lepra also actively promotes and facilitates the collective organisation of people affected by leprosy, LF and disabilities. By joining Self-Help / Self-Support groups, they grow in confidence and empower themselves to make their voices heard and claim their rights. This is particularly important in challenging the discrimination that they commonly face in all areas of their lives, including in respect of opportunities for employment and occupation. Lepra, together with these groups, also advocates for employment, training and livelihood opportunities from which people affected by leprosy, LF and related disabilities can benefit.

Environment

In 2019/20, Lepra adopted a comprehensive environmental policy and associated practices to reduce the environmental impact of our work. This included measures such as dispensing with paper-based systems

and embracing technology to enable staff to work from home – a shift which served us well when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. As a result, our carbon footprint has been significantly reduced in 2020 and 2021 and we will endeavour to continue this trend as we review our practices on an ongoing basis.

In addition, and wherever relevant, we give careful consideration to the environmental sustainability of the programmes we deliver. For example, Lepra was a co-partner to the PRODISA project in Mozambique which ran from March 2018 through to February 2020. This had the goal of increasing the income of 1,000 impoverished smallholder farmers (of whom 30% were affected by leprosy or LF) in Ile and Lugela Districts of Zambezia Province. The project had three main pillars, two of which were directly related to environmental sustainability: 1) the promotion of conservation agriculture to improve nutrition; 2) a 'combined approach' to healthcare needs, with timely diagnosis and referral combined with self-care rehabilitation; and 3) the capacity building of self-help groups on new agricultural practices and livelihoods. Despite facing various implementation challenges, not least the engagement of persons with a disability in agricultural activities, the project improved nutritional levels through new sustainable agricultural practices, enhanced livelihood security and reduced the popular prejudice encountered by the target group.

Anti-corruption

Lepra has a 'zero tolerance' policy towards fraud, bribery and corruption, and is committed to developing an anti-corruption culture. This is demonstrated in our Anti-Fraud, Bribery & Corruption, Ethical Fundraising, and Donations policies. We have robust processes and controls in place to minimise the risks of fraud, bribery and corruption, and review the effectiveness of these on a regular basis. We require all individuals and organisations who receive Lepra funds or who represent Lepra, including our staff, volunteers, suppliers, grant recipients, partners, contractors and agents, to act in accordance with our policies. We also carry out due diligence to satisfy any questions prior to engaging with new partners or donors to ensure they also have appropriate policies and procedures in place to uphold our values and principles.

Our Board and Senior Management Team meetings, annual reviews, quarterly reports and monthly monitoring ensure we remain focused on our charitable objects, and continue to be transparent and accountable in all that we do.