

PROGRESS REPORT

July 2020 – July 2021

Our Commitment to support the
United Nations' sustainability principles



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Minerva Legal Practice “the Firm” is committed to conducting business in a sustainable, ethical, and responsible manner as it is our belief that responsible business practices are essential to long term sustainable success.

The paramount goal of the Firm is to be a business that not only provides excellent services to our clients but actively encourages quality education, good health and well being, gender equality, and ethnic diversity. Our CSR initiatives propels us in playing active roles in our community, business organization and the world at large while recognizing the need for preservation of the environment and sustainability.

It is in furtherance of our goal towards full integration of sustainability and corporate social responsibility in all aspects of our business that the Firm in 2019, joined the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), one of the world’s largest corporate sustainability initiatives for businesses committed to aligning their strategies and operations with 10 principles in the areas of human rights, labor standards, environment and anti-corruption.

The year 2020 was undoubtedly one of the most challenging year globally as the advent of COVID 19 pandemic adversely affected families, businesses, economies, labour market, amongst others causing an increase in the level of poverty in developing countries, thereby affecting various institutions and organizations in achieving its set goals.

Notwithstanding the negative effect of the COVID 19 on the global economy, the Firm affirms our commitment to supporting the UNGC principles along with our continued drive to align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The firm has included the ten UNGC principles in our Code of Conduct and Code of Business Ethics in order to ensure the protection of human rights and fair labour practices throughout our operations, to avoid corruption and to protect the environment.

Apart from engaging with the UNGC Principles in our daily internal and external operations, the firm works with the broader scope of sustainability, where our target is to lead employees, clients, partners and stakeholders into developing and integrating the UNGC principles into their various activities.

The firm is pleased to submit its first Communication on Progress which provides an overview of the actions undertaken during the period under review, in furthering the objectives of the Global Compact.

THE FIRM: MINERVA LEGAL PRACTICE

Minerva Legal Practice (MLP) is a foremost law firm in Nigeria that prides itself in providing strategic and pragmatic client- focused legal guidance. Our core values are:

- Accountability
- Integrity & Honesty
- Hard Work
- Service to our Communities
- Excellence
- Mutual respect and Firm Mindednesses
- Strategic and Organizational Flexibility
- Teamwork & Collaboration

As a team of experienced lawyers who have depth of knowledge and experience in different areas of law practice, we provide legal solution to our client's legal need by evaluating any and all risks involved in their transactions and applying varied risk management tools and strategies to mitigate and hedge those risks.

MLP ethos is about delivering a friendly and approachable service, with the commitment that the needs of our clients come first at every stage as we continue to focus on digital strategy, creative legal solutions, and emphasis on the value of services we provide to clients.

Our international practice means we are structured to advise clients either directly from our well-established office in Nigeria, or in collaboration with several leading law firms across Africa and Europe. This ensures clients receive the most appropriate expertise.

Using our core values as a guide, the firm has been to utilize same in the advancement and implementation of the United Nations Global Compact Principles and initiatives as well as solving social issues and improving corporate value.

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRINCIPAL PARTNER

As a signatory to the United Nations Global Compact, we re-affirm our unwavering commitment towards upholding and applying the UN Global Compact Principles as part of our business model whilst taking appropriate steps to ensure the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As we all know, the year 2020 was undoubtedly a year of unprecedented challenges and like all businesses worldwide, we felt the impact of the downturn in economic activities occasioned by the pandemic.

Amidst all the social and economic disruptions, we fulfilled our commitments to the United Nations during the course of the year by taking several decisive steps to foster the United Nations Global Compact principles and its initiatives within and outside our business operations to wit; restructuring our Corporate Social Responsibility Policies ("CSR") to reflect the Principles of the UN Global Compact, donating to causes that support our commitments, promoting gender equality within our work force, as well as promotion of staff welfare for a more sustainable future amongst others.

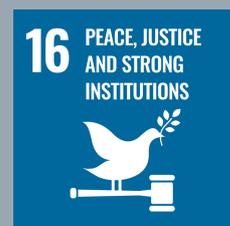
Going forward, we pledge our continuous support to the United Nations Global Compact principles and initiatives in order to build a more sustainable world for ourselves, clients and all concerned stakeholders.

Uche Okoronkwo
Principal Partner



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COMPACT PRINCIPLES AND INITIATIVES

HUMAN RIGHTS – PRINCIPLES AND IMPLEMENTATION



Principle 1: Business should respect and protect internationally proclaimed human rights.

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

In line with Minerva Legal Practice (“the Firm”) commitment towards the promotion and protection of internationally proclaimed Human Rights, an entire chapter in the Employees Handbook was dedicated to rules and regulations aimed at protecting and respecting the human rights of all employees within its employment.

The firm encourages employees to utilize its Grievance Resolution Procedure in reporting human rights violations and provide relevant feedbacks that will assist the Firm in curbing and decisively tackling these infringements.

In keeping with these principles, the firm established a five (5) member committee to checkmate acts or actions likely to undermine the dignity or esteem of any individual or create an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. The committee is mandated to submit a bi-annual report to the management.

Notwithstanding the above, the firm encourages employees to report any human rights violation within and outside the firm with an assurance that such employee's identity will not be revealed, except while seeking redress, it becomes necessary for the identity of the compliant to be disclosed, in so doing, the consent of the compliant must be first sought and obtained.

To further advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the firm recruits support staffs who are adequately remunerated and supported financially to enable them live above poverty level. Moreso, the firm recently donated some learning materials to indigent students to foster their overall development

As a matter of corporate policy, the firm adhere to the internationally protected human rights as enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as Amended).

In line with the firm's commitment to reduce inequality in its work environment, the firm provides employees with equal opportunities to attend paid trainings, capacity building seminars and workshops in other to assist them stretch to the full extent of their potential, irrespective of age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, background, religion, etc.



Given the firm's zero tolerance to issues pertaining to infringement of human rights, the firm actively identifies and addresses any actual or potential human rights violations and take active steps to eliminating such occurrences so as to protect the right of each individual.

Thus, prior to any engagement with our business partners, clients, stakeholders and vendors, we ensure that they understand and comply with the relevant laws, rules and regulations governing the said relationships. This is to ensure that parties are well protected from any human rights abuse.

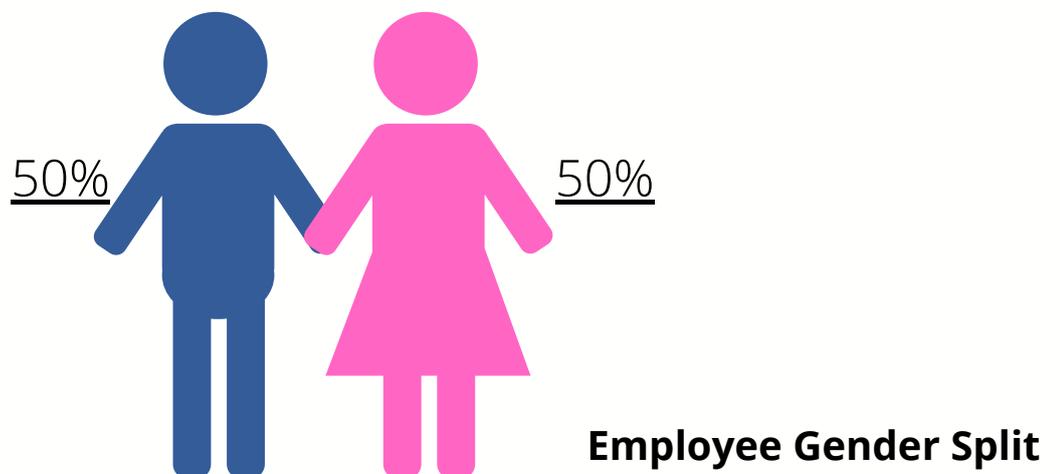
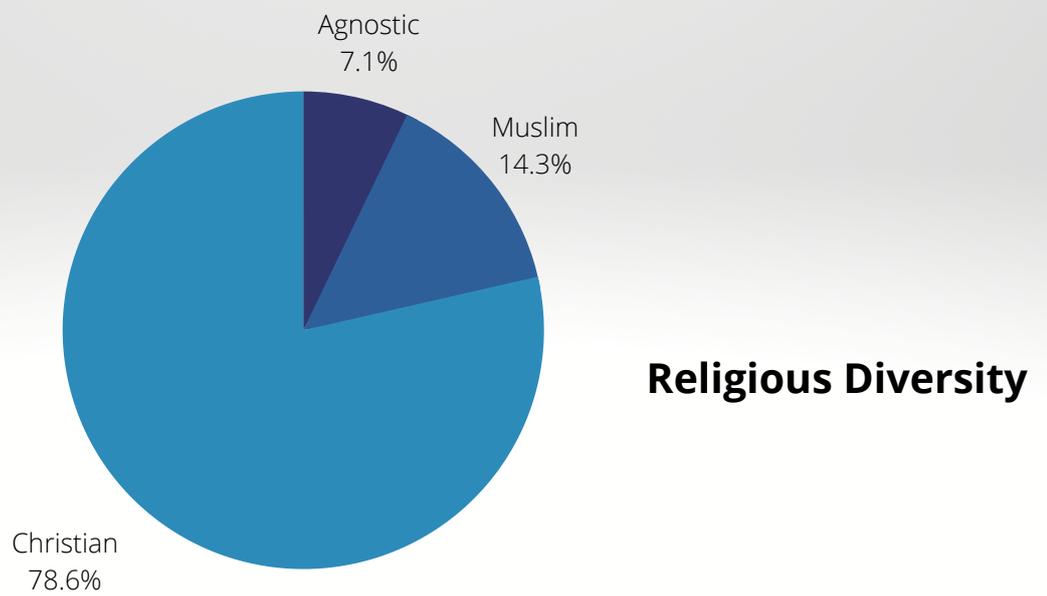
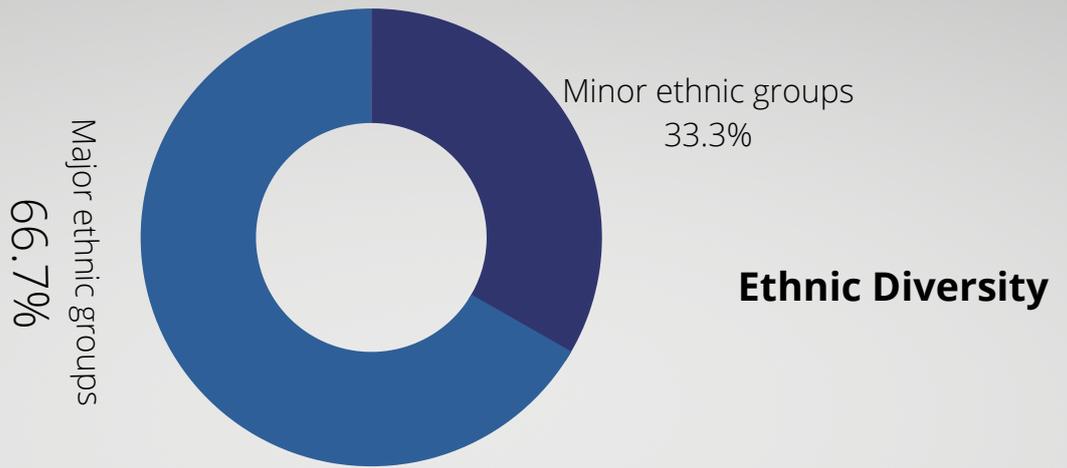
As part of the firm's commitment to uphold the UN Global Compact Principle, the firm is currently collaborating with Social Accountability International (SAI) to ensure that it conducts business in a way that is fair and decent for the purposes of advancing human right, and a socially responsible workplace for business benefit.



Measurement of Outcomes



- The five (5) member committee has investigated a case between two individuals and come up with recommendations which have been implemented
- The Firm conducts yearly survey on how to improve its existing policies on of human rights violations.
- The Firm holds monthly mandatory general meetings wherein issues bordering on the general welfare of the employees are extensively discussed and addressed.
- The firm's employee ratio is currently at 50:50 % (percent) and our management team is currently comprised of equal numbers of male and female.
- As a Firm, our employees are from diverse ethnicities and backgrounds. Our metrics for measurement of diversity are: gender, ethnicity, age, religion and education.



LABOUR – Principles and Its Implementation

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



In tandem with the Firm's commitment to the UN Global Compact Principle on Labour, we adhere to and take proactive steps to realize the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles. The Firm's policies and business outlook creates an enabling work environment for employees to exercise their fundamental rights as enshrined in our constitution without discrimination or oppression.

The Firm upholds freedom of association and the right of collective bargaining through its monthly welfare meetings. At this meeting, employees are given equal opportunities to express their opinion on the current state of affair and make suggestions how to improve the working conditions.



To further enhance our professional development and social responsibilities employees are encouraged to join different Associations such as the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators of Nigeria, African Bar Association, Nigerian Employers' Consultative Association amongst others, to participate in certification and licensing programs. We also encourage their active membership of these Associations by paying their annual dues and sponsoring conferences and certifications programs.

The terms of our employment contract are in line with our local laws and International best practices. We offer flexible working hours for a good work-life balance which affords employees the opportunity to pursue their hobbies and spend time with loved ones.

In addition to the above, we provide Employees Handbook wherein all policies of the Firm are clearly stated without ambiguity. The Handbook also provides for Grievance Procedure which employees can explore in the event of any unfair treatment or non-adherence to any set rules.

Through Internship trainings, the Firm offers students the opportunity to gain direct practical legal experience during the holidays in order not to interfere with their studies. This also serve a means of earning income to support their academic pursuit.

The Firm's recruitment process is transparent giving equal opportunities to intending employees. Applications are made through the website and thereafter an oral and written interview is conducted, where best/qualified candidates are selected to join the Minerva Legal ("ML") family without any favoritism or bias.

We ensure all employees are adequately remunerated and salaries increments, and promotions are informed by performance. This is determined through bi-annual appraisals conducted by various Line Managers.

Health is wealth, therefore, the general wellbeing of ML Family is of paramount importance. The Firm organizes medical checkups and provide support on any health-related issues. Medical experts are invited on quarterly basis to give health talks and advice on healthy living and lifestyle.

The Firm organizes weekly extra-curricular activities and encourages employees to take emotional intelligence classes aimed towards ensuring that they are physically fit and mentally alert to carry on any task or assignment as well as improve their general wellbeing.

As part of our commitment to employees' health and general well-being, we took a trip to Illashe Beach Resort, Lagos, Nigeria after a busy first half of the year to help our employees relieve stress and decompress.





As an active participant in the UN Global Compact initiative, we have partnered with underfunded public schools and non-profit organizations in order to facilitate the realization of these SDG Goals.

In furtherance of our partnership with the underfunded school, we visited Ilasan Community Nursery and Primary School Jakande Lekki, Lagos during the period under review. Upon our visit, we observed that the number of students available was relatively low and we were informed by the management of the school that majority of the students were unable to attend classes as a result of flooded environment and stagnant waters which is a breeding ground for earthworms, spirogyra, sun flies e.t.c. We also noticed that some of the students were barefoot. To this end, we provided rain boots for the student to ease access to and from school and reduce their exposure to health hazards.

We also donated educational materials to schools to improve the learning experience. We shall continue to extend this opportunity to several other underfunded schools and indigent students.



In the course of one of our Corporate Social responsibilities ("CSR") programs, we were invited by Sparkle Foundation to the official opening and commissioning of the remodeled Early Childhood Care and Development Center ("ECCD") for children aged 3 to 5 in Banjo Primary School, Ottumara Community, Lagos. This initiative is aimed at integrating, shaping and preparing the children for the educational system, as well as helping them maximize and reach their full potential



5 GENDER EQUALITY



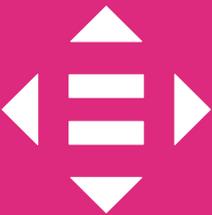
The female gender is underrepresented in economic decisions, and they are faced with various obstacles in their career advancement such as harassment and pressure to fulfil gender roles. Thus, female empowerment is of utmost importance to achieving equality as partners and beneficiaries of development.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Thus, in our quest to bridge the gap, the Firm identifies with women at various spectrum of life through the provision of legal aid to women and indigent members in our community. Presently, the Firm is negotiating terms of partnership with Women in Technology Organization (“WTEC”) Lekki Phase One, Ikate, Lagos in a bid to promote gender equality in the Information and Technology industries especially in Nigeria, which is male dominated.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



The Firm also extends its support to female entrepreneurs through the provision of unrestricted access to legal services and business support as well as offering female-owned startups free business registrations with Corporate Affairs Commission (“CAC”).

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



We also provide pro bono services to women and other indigent members of the community who cannot afford the services of a legal practitioner especially in criminal matters.

presently, we are putting in place initiatives to create environments where women thrive.

Our offices are well equipped with adequate working tools and resources to enable employees carry out their duties effectively in a conducive without distractions and interruptions.

The Firm has non-discriminatory practices that embrace diversity and inclusion. We promote decent work and sustainable economic growth by improving workplace practices through provision of opportunities such as on-the-job training for our employees to develop and achieve their professional aspirations while enjoying successful and rewarding career

MEASUREMENT OF OUTCOME

1. In the year under review, 40% (percent) of employees were promoted while the salaries of 95% (percent) of employees were increased without any bias or discrimination.
2. The Firm also represented a female employee who was discriminated against on ground of physical disability
3. Through the instrumentality of mediation, issues are being resolved amongst employees and relationships are strengthened.
4. There has been increase of employees' attendance to virtual conferences, seminars, meetings, paid training identified during bio-annual work appraisal and review.
5. There have been no issues of and/ or cases of discrimination, bullying and harassment in the workplace.
6. Free business registration for women
7. Through pro bono services, 4 inmates were released.

ENVIRONMENT



Minerva Legal operates in the service industry and has limited exposure to environmental hazards. Nevertheless, we are committed to preserving, protecting, and responsibly managing the environment in which we live and operate for our long-term success.

In line with our commitment, we introduced a “Green Conduct Policy” that outlines a clear course of action aimed at reducing our negative impacts on the environment. This policy encourages and promotes paperless working, e-filing, e-billing, recycling and reduced paper usage by duplex printing.

The firm utilizes environmentally friendly products that are easy to recycle in our daily operations and strive for energy efficiency through the reduction of electricity consumption and waste (by using high-efficiency lighting and powering off all electronics when not in use), and the use of alternative energy sources.



The waste generated by the firm in the course of business is disposed through waste management companies that convert waste to value added products such as energy or recycled products thus promoting a zero waste future.

The Green Conduct Policy encourages the use of virtual meetings and video conferencing software to reduce the number of in person meetings thereby reducing overhead costs and carbon emissions. The firm also encourages employees to carpool in their commutes.

In the reporting period, the firm adopted the use of inverters as an alternative energy source in our daily operations to reduce reliance on hydrocarbons, thereby decreasing our carbon footprint.





Minerva Legal continues to move the remains of its IT infrastructure to the cloud, with very little on-premise hardware aside from laptops and desktops and we are undertaking a digital transformation initiative which aims to better streamline the business through workflow and digitization. This will help the firm further reduce the number of printers, printer consumables and paper.

We actively support, educate and advise our employees, clients and stakeholders to promote environmental responsibility by advocating for policies around the world to help tackle climate crises.

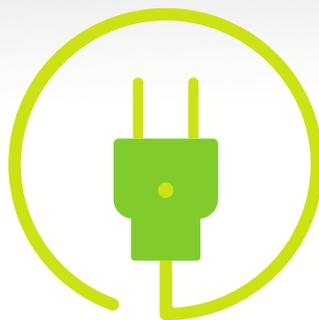
We will be implementing more eco-friendly initiatives and a reward system within the office to employees who take part in community projects to preserve the local environment.

Measurement of Outcomes

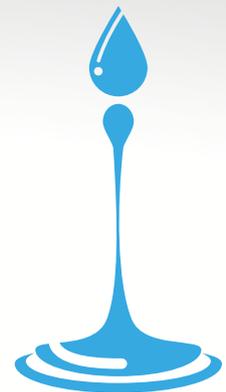
In the past 12 months, we have achieved:



40% reduction in waste



20% reduction in
electricity consumption



20% reduction in
water consumption

ANTI-CORRUPTION – Principles and Implementation



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

As a firm founded on the twin pillars of integrity and transparency, we have an ethical business practice which:

- prohibits corrupt practices by members of staff &
- encourages proper record to ensure accountability amongst members of staff and

The firm has in place both internal and external mechanisms to ensure that all its business operations and dealings with clients, business partners and relevant stakeholders are conducted in a transparent manner devoid of all forms of corrupt practices and in line with International best practices.

Further, as a prerequisite for business engagements by some federal agencies in partnership with the Firm. The Firm periodically engages the services of external auditing firms to audit its business activities for each fiscal year and submit its financial reports to these agencies.



The Firm is currently partnering with notable anti-corruption institutions in Nigeria like the Economic and Financial Crime Commission, Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, Standard Organisation of Nigeria amongst other to fight against the production of substandard products and other form of corrupt business practices within its jurisdiction.



In compliance with our national laws on taxation and other mandatory deductions by the government on incomes of employees, the firm regularly effects applicable deductions on employee's salary and remits same to the appropriate authorities in compliance with the relevant laws, and such records are kept for easy access and inspection.

In line with the firm's commitment to promoting quality education in Nigeria, the Firm has donated several educational materials which includes but not limited to textbooks, notebooks, pens, pencil, rain boots etc. to indigent students at some public school in Lagos State to aid the learning experience of the students. The firm also ensured that the said educational materials donated were directly distributed to affected beneficiaries in other to prevent the diversion of same for other unrelated purpose.

Whilst striving to make the world a better place, the Firm has contributed in eradicating poverty within its work environment by paying employees competitive salaries obtainable within the industry, as well as setting up an internal mechanism to monitor and ensure that donations made to charitable organizations, schools and non-governmental organizations by the Firm and its Clients are properly utilized and not diverted for personal use and unrelated purposes, thereby curbing corruption

MEASUREMENT OF OUTCOMES

There were no corrupt findings against any Partner, member of staff or our business partners by the Economic & Financial Crimes Commission or any relevant government agency in this regard.

CHALLENGES

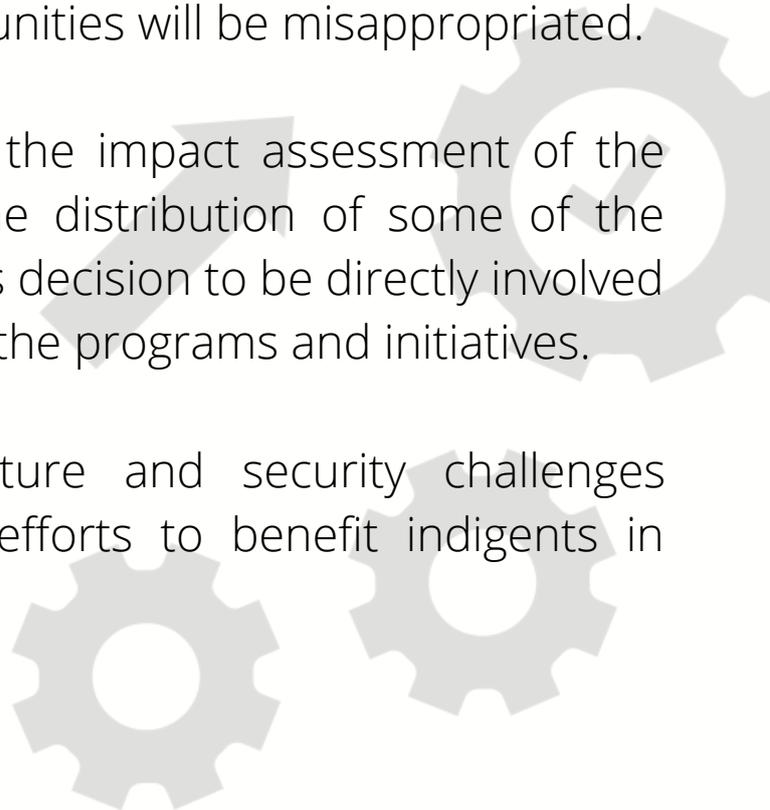
The implementation of the UN Global Compact principles and initiatives within the period under review was not without its challenges and limitations.

It is imperative to mention that bureaucratic bottleneck affected the creation of strategic partnership with some organizations including government agencies, and this occasioned challenges in the implementation of some of the initiatives.

In the course of executing some of the initiatives, a number of the non-governmental organizations (“NGOs”), schools and community leaders demanded that we make donations to their causes without affording us the opportunity to have any level of interaction with the beneficiaries of the initiatives. This position presented some level of concern, especially whether the resources donated to improve the living conditions of the indigents in the concerned communities will be misappropriated.

Our level of concern as regards the impact assessment of the initiative and accountability in the distribution of some of the donated items informed the Firm’s decision to be directly involved in the implementation of some of the programs and initiatives.

Finally, lack of good infrastructure and security challenges materially frustrated plans and efforts to benefit indigents in certain parts of the country.



Conclusion

Within the year under review, the Firm played a role in enhancing and upholding the principles of the UN Global Compact, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In furtherance of this objective, we have realigned our business operations in keeping with the mission of the United Nations.

Moving forward, the Firm pledges its continuous commitment and for this reason, shall undertake a number of activities including but not limited to those listed below in the upcoming year in furtherance of its effort to advance the United Nations principles and goals:

1. Reinforcing gender equality;

- By the year 2022, we aspire to champion the rights of females, by formulating and implementing a gender-based action plan to combat women facing challenges globally. In our business, we shall continue to implement an all-inclusive culture, and support employees to maximize their potential by giving equal opportunities and incentives irrespective of gender.
- The Firm intends to drive an employee-initiated Mentorship Program designed to provide a mentoring structure towards supporting women to succeed in a range of career paths as well as organize career talk programs for secondary school students.

1. Incorporating Environmental Social Governance (“ESG”);

- As an active participant, Minerva Legal Practice shall continue to incorporate Environmental Social Governance (“ESG”) into our practices and implement ESG as part of our operational strategy.
- ## 1. Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions is essential for the delivery of our 2022 Agenda. We believe that businesses can help achieve this goal by putting in place necessary measures aimed at curbing corruption.
- The Firm shall continue to work with relevant law enforcement agencies on transparency and anti-corruption initiatives to help foster an internal & external culture of ethics and accountability.
 - The Firm aims at expanding our pro bono services by fostering coordinated action for those unable to afford legal services in a bid to drive meaningful actions and positive results.

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