

UN GLOBAL COMPACT: COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT (COE)



Period covered by this Communication on Engagement:
From 1 November 2020 to 31 October 2022

Part I: Statement of Continued Support by the Executive Director

Zurich, 3 October 2022

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

I am pleased to confirm that Swisscontact, an independent Swiss foundation for international development and technical cooperation, 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 on 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.

Yours sincerely,



Philippe Schneuwly
CEO and Executive Director

Part II: Description of Actions

Swisscontact signed the UN Global Compact in 2009. As a member we have been actively promoting the ten principles of the UNGC. With this Communication on Engagement, we would like to highlight some of our key activities of the last two years.

Human Rights (Principles 1-2)

Swisscontact's **Code of Conduct (CoC)** obliges all employees and partners to non-discrimination, equality, and inclusion. Further, Swisscontact has a PSEAH (Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment) policy that defines zero tolerance for any SEA incidents, as well as the reporting process in cases of such incidents. Swisscontact is committed to always acting on cases of SEA and addressing the needs of victims/survivors. Swisscontact sees PSEAH as a shared responsibility that is undertaken through strong leadership as well as by reducing gender inequalities and power gaps. This is how Swisscontact ensures the application of its **PSEAH policy**:

- **Within the organisation:** Swisscontact has an e-learning course on PSEAH, which is mandatory for all staff. In addition, compliance officers receive specific and more extensive training on the Code of Conduct and PSEAH than other staff.
- **With partners:** Swisscontact supports its partners in the management of SEA cases whenever requested to do so. If there is reason to believe that a partner organisation has mishandled a complaint, that organisation risks having its funding withdrawn or the partnership terminated.
- **With beneficiaries:** Swisscontact applies a systemic approach, working as a facilitator and not directly with beneficiaries. If it does so, it is always with the involvement of a partner organisation.

To ensure that our partners respect principles of equality and inclusion, Swisscontact counts further with a Partner **Due Diligence** process as well as a specific Partnership Management Policy. In this process, particular importance is attached to project partners' perceptions of compliance with legislation and sustainability criteria such as "gender equality and social inclusion". In addition, a policy for cooperation with the private sector has been established, in which a due diligence has to be carried out for donors of the private sector. It includes the criterion of "gender equality and social inclusion" is an important evaluation topic.

At the workplace, as well as in our work with partners and beneficiaries, no sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment is tolerated. Swisscontact counts with a clear **speak-up line** with PSEAH focal points (ombudspersons/compliance officers) in place, and that additionally provides the possibility to make complaints at an external provider (Safecall). Swisscontact takes actions against perpetrator, but also against any staff whether they are the subject of a complaint or not, who carry out retaliatory action against complainants, victims or other witnesses. Staff who are found to do this are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Labour (Principles 3-6)

The **Code of Conduct** of Swisscontact obliges its employees and partners to fully comply with the International Labour Standards which includes the principles 3-6. In the selection process of our project partner, sub-contractors and local SMEs, we check their compliance with the Core Conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and do not cooperate with non-compliant companies and organisations.

In addition to this reference, a specific additional chapter address the elimination exploitation of youth and the effective abolition of child labour; Swisscontact is keen to **prevent children / youth abuse and exploitation** while promoting youth participation in the different programs. This applies to all the programs' stakeholders, including Swisscontact employees, partners and subcontractors. The organisation maintains a high level of protection of both children and youth from any form of abuse and exploitation by either employees or other parties working with Swisscontact. As part of the CoC, Swisscontact requires all employees to identify and address risk factors and prevent abuse, child labour and exploitation of children

and youth as well as ensuring total compliance by all employees, partners and subcontractors. Such abuse, child labour and exploitation include physical, emotional and health deprivation that's effects their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to the physical and mental development.

Most prominent in our work is the **elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation** (principle 6), equal rights and opportunities. This principle is therefore additionally differentiated and addressed in A) our Code of Conduct, B) our gender equality and social inclusion policy and C) illustrated by different project examples

A) Code of Conduct

The principle of non-discrimination is clearly stated in our Code of Conduct with a specific paragraph: The Swiss Federal Constitution states: "No person may be discriminated against, in particular on grounds of origin, race, gender, age, language, social position, way of life, religious, ideological, or political convictions, or because of a physical, mental or psychological disability." 4 "Employees must not be discriminated against on the basis of their sex, whether directly or indirectly, including on the basis of their marital status, their family situation or, in the case of female employees, of pregnancy. This prohibition applies in particular to hiring, allocation of duties, setting of working conditions, pay, basic and advanced training, promotion and dismissal."

Swisscontact also considers the following behaviours as discriminating:

- putting certain groups (e.g. persons of certain origins, working mothers) at a disadvantage with respect to promotion, training, or bonuses.
- ignoring an individual belonging to a certain group (e.g. cleaning staff)
- xenophobic or racist jokes, statements, and comments
- homosexual or "gay" jokes, statements and comments
- offensive imitation of language or posture

B) Gender equality and social inclusion

Particularly when discriminating against whole groups, offenders usually feel they can hide behind common prejudices, moods, and opinions. We do not want and must not support this. Swisscontact does not tolerate any discrimination neither against groups nor against individuals.

Against this background, Swisscontact promotes **gender equality and the social inclusion** of all people. As an employer, we place particular emphasis on balanced leadership structures with family-friendly work conditions. We include the gender perspective in all our project activities. Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Social inclusion is defined as a process which leads individuals and groups to taking part in society by benefiting from its opportunities and developing their abilities.

Swisscontact approaches gender equality and social inclusion by **focusing** on:

- Equal access to resources (economic, social, cultural), assets (skills), economic opportunities, and political/public representation.
- Equal agency regarding decision-making power over income, time, workload, and leadership.
- Equal rights to ownership, mobility, income, and political participation.
- Positive impact on gender norms, roles, institutions, social recognition, reduction of violence and well-being.

In addition, gender equality and social inclusion are a means to create employability, income and jobs, to reduce the risk for violence and increase decision-making power and well-being.

Swisscontact **projects** have since many years considered gender and social inclusion issues to various degrees. The Thematic Leadership Gender/GESI is working on capitalising on project experiences, promoting exchange of best practices and on elaborating institutional resources that serve as a basis for Swisscontact staff. The following **Policies and Guidelines** have been elaborated between 2020 and 2022:

- Swisscontact's Policy on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)
- Swisscontact's Gender Guideline for Projects
- Swisscontact's Roadmap Towards Gender Equality at Institutional Level

- Swisscontact's approach and guides to Conflict Sensitivity
- Swisscontact's approach to Social Inclusion
- E-Learning on gender sensitization

C) Project Examples

An example is the “Rural Opportunities” project in Honduras. Its objective is to improve the productivity and increase incomes of vulnerable population groups, which include young men and women working in the tourism, cashew nut, fruits, and dairy sectors. Based on an in-depth analysis, the project team developed a strategy to overcome gender-specific discrepancies. It was determined that women are underrepresented in leadership positions of cooperatives, even though their participation as members is essential for successful cooperation. Therefore, these organisations were given close guidance to foster women’s participation. This has resulted in women now heading committees at cashew nut processing facilities and dairy processors. Additionally, sensitisation campaigns were launched on social media to raise awareness of the different workloads faced by women and men. The introduction of time-saving technologies (such as weeding machines and wheelbarrows) has had a sustainable effect on women’s workloads, and they are now more able to participate in decision-making processes.

An additional example is provided by a vocational education project in Bolivia, financed by SDC and implemented by Swisscontact. Its purpose is to promote economic and social equality. Poor and vulnerable population groups gain access to vocational training and can thereby enhance their employability. Coordinating with the Bolivian Ministry of Education, the project implements initiatives to strengthen public healthcare education centres, among other things. These centres target people with disabilities and provide them with vocational training. The approaches applied at these centres will serve as a national point of reference for vocational education policy. In 2020, professional profiles and curricula were drafted, and equipment was procured for various professional areas. COVID-19 safety guidelines were also drafted. On the whole, the project promotes economic resilience and independence for people with disabilities, thereby facilitating their inclusion in society and their ability to provide a stable living for themselves.

Environment (Principles 7-9)

Swisscontact has a 3-level approach to environmental responsibility (Source: Swisscontact Policy on Environmental Responsibility):



Promotion of green sectors: Swisscontact fosters competencies and skills for environmental protection, actively seeking solutions for the sustainable use of resources. In various projects “green sectors” such as recycling and sustainable transportation are supported with the corresponding know-how, while environmentally friendly businesses are strengthened. The “Markets for Recycling” in Bolivia supports local businesses to build business models for processing and monetizing waste materials from the transportation sector. These materials include tyres, lead batteries, and scrap metal. This lowers CO2emissions, and fewer

pollutants contaminate the environment. At the same time, new jobs are created, and businesses grow. Working together with local actors, the project team is implementing various initiatives: for example, laws are drafted that obligate manufacturers to use resources conservatively and implement recycling; various webinars, events, and sensitisation campaigns on the topics of waste management and circular economy are held. In addition, an app has been developed that brings together waste producers, green businesses, and waste collectors, in order to facilitate the recycling of materials.

Greening sectors (example from agriculture): For fish farmers in Benin’s Toho lagoon, earning a decent living is a difficult endeavour. Production is low and they must compete with cheap foreign fish imports. The objective of the “Béninclusif” project is to increase fish farmers’ productivity and incomes. However, the Toho lagoon is a fragile ecosystem and is under increasing pressure from various human activities. For this reason, the support provided to fish production must also mitigate negative environmental impacts.

The project team has identified water pollution from home-made, low-quality fish feed as having a critical impact on the environment. Another cause is inappropriate farming techniques and air pollution from primitive fish smoking units. Based on these findings, fish farmers have designed interventions together with the project team that combine economic and environmental solutions, for example, the introduction of affordable, high-quality fish feed (made from Black Tiger Flies) that is far less damaging to the environment. The project is financed through private donations and SDC.

Do-no-harm: This is the minimum requirement for all our projects.

Thematic Global Communities of Practice (CoPs) are internal exchange platforms that serve to connect our staff worldwide and link them to global and regional KCM (Knowledge and Content Management) initiatives. The toolbox helps projects to assess environmental risks and impacts, develop mitigation measures and systematically integrate those into all steps of the project design and implementation, ranging from a basic do-no-harm approach to a strong environmental focus. In addition, key environmental indicators for skills and enterprise projects were developed and will be measured.

Anti-Corruption (Principle 10)

Whistleblowing is the most effective way to detect fraud and corruption. Therefore, Swisscontact has established a whistleblowing policy and implemented an additional reporting line for internal and external whistleblowers such as employees, subcontractors, suppliers and beneficiaries. They can report anonymous or namely by phone or by form on an internet platform which is hosted by a professional provider (Safecall). Details and links are on Swisscontact’s website available.

Part III: Measurement of Outcomes

On organisation level:

- In 2021 Environment and Climate was systematically mainstreamed into our PCM (Inclusive Systems Development Approach)
- In 2021 environment checkpoints were integrated in our project acquisition process
- In 2022 environmental aspects were integrated into guiding / strategic documents of all working areas
- In 2022 an internal strategic climate change working group was launched
- In 2022 an internal working group on CO2 emission reduction of the organisation was launched
- In 2020 the Environmental Policy was updated for example with an overview of environmental responsibility at different levels within the company

Through our projects:

- CO2 emission reduction of 1681 tons (several projects closed)
- CO2 emission reduction of 10’202 tons in 2020
- 1017 tons of waste reduced / recycled in 2021

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- 101,800 people have completed training programmes in skills development, entrepreneurship, and labour market insertion (49.8% women) in 2021
- 94,900 people have completed training programmes in skills development, entrepreneurship, and labour market insertion (35.3% women) in 2020
- 59,4 million CHF additional income generated by farmers and SMEs in 2021
- 71,0 million CHF additional income generated by farmers and SMEs in 2020