

COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT (COE)



**Self Help
Africa**

Period covered by this Communication on Engagement

From: January 2020 to December 2021

Part I. Statement of continued support by the CEO or equivalent



**Self Help
Africa**

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H.E. António Guterres
Secretary-General United Nations
New York
NY 10017
USA

Dear Secretary General,

I am pleased to confirm that Self Help Africa in Ireland reaffirms its support to the United Nations Global Compact and its ten principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption.

Self Help Africa recognises that a key requirement for participation in the UN Global Compact is the submission of a Communication on Engagement (CoE) that describes our organisation's efforts to support the implementation of the ten principles and to engage with the Global Compact.

Self Help Africa have been a member of UN Global Compact since 2019. This is our Communication of Engagement covering the period January 2020 to December 2021.

Sincerely yours,

David Dalton
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Part II Description of Actions:

Self Help Africa (SHA) is the trading name of Gorta CLG, registered in Ireland under Company Reg No. 28228. In 2021 SHA completed a merger with United Purpose (UP), the Merger significantly extended the organisations reach and capacity to deliver poverty eradication programmes.

The member entities of the Gorta Group (Self Help Africa, Partner Africa, TruTrade, United Purpose and CUMO) are galvanised by a joint vision to create a thriving and inclusive economy in sub-Saharan Africa, Brazil and Bangladesh that provides sustainable livelihood opportunities for all. We are driven by a set of common goals in pursuit of sustainable development and achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Below we provide an update on actions taken in 2020 & 2021 in support of the UN Global Compact and its principles. The specific activities relate to the following:

- Engage companies in Global Compact-related issues
- Provide commentary to companies on Communications on Progress

Engage companies in Global Compact- related issues

Human Rights

Principle 1: Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights.

Principle 2: Businesses should make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.

COVID-19

- Working with our local teams, partners, government ministries and UN agencies, Self Help Africa supported efforts to disseminate information and promote safety measures to curb the pandemic in the countries where we work.
- Covid-19- related awareness -raising was embedded into our activities, while handwashing, sanitising facilities and masks were distributed to our staff, partners, and smallholders. Mobile phone services were also used to disseminate information on Covid -19 prevention measures.

Safeguarding

- SHA has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse and exploitation by employees, partners, and associates.
- We continue to implement our Safeguarding, and Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse policies which are aligned with international best practice.
- Safeguarding is addressed throughout the organisation through the three pillars of prevention, reporting and response. We strive to ensure compliance through training, terms and conditions for suppliers, a robust complaints response mechanism, whistleblowing channels and disciplinary measure up to and including dismissal and incorporation of the policy into partner agreements.

Equality & Diversity

- SHA is committed to ensuring diversity, equality, inclusion, and anti-racism at every level in the organisation.
- A staff-led committee, Anti Racism Inclusion Solidarity Equality (ARISE), has been created to progress these aims and strengthen practices in a rigorous, compassionate, and imaginative way.
- A self-assessment has been undertaken among employees to assess attitudes and behaviours at all levels within the organisation.
- An ARISE Roadmap has been developed with clear actions identified and agreed between staff and management in order to contribute to the promotion of equality and diversity.
- The committee has also provided a number of training/awareness sessions, for example training on unconscious bias, and SHA is committed to an ongoing programme of learning and improvement in this area.

Human Rights

- Partner Africa provides advisory services to support clients with human rights due diligence and responsible sourcing. In 2021 Partner Africa undertook 14 advisory assignments working with clients to respect human rights and labour standards and to improve the lives of workers, communities, and producers in their African based supply chain.
- In northwest Cameroon, UP project 'Bridging the Gap' supports local human rights organisations in Cameroon to reduce conflict between cattle herders and crop farmers over land and water access. We continue to support initiatives to promote intercultural dialogue and cultural rights.
- United Purpose has a long-standing relationship with Brazilian Federal Public Prosecutors Office for Labour issues who regularly funds social accountability and child protection related projects, In Brazil's northeast region, UP's social accountability and advocacy work led to 4,500 people gaining access to improved services or rights during 2021.

Labour

Principle 3: Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;

Principle 4: the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour;

Principle 5: the effective abolition of child labour; and

Principle 6: the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

Partner Africa

- Partner Africa, which marked its 10th anniversary in 2021, remains the only non-government organisation on the continent to conduct ethical audits designed to improve conditions for workers, and provide advisory services to employers. Its main clients include international businesses and multinational enterprises, Africa-based suppliers and producers, and non-governmental organisations.
- Partner Africa conducted ethical audits that assessed working conditions by gathering the experiences of farm and factory workers in Africa who were part of export chains to the UK, EU and the US. The audits were carried out by local people with the relevant skills who received training in social audits to ensure local language, culture and tradition were acknowledged when carrying out the audits.
- In 2021 Partner Africa conducted 909 ethical audits for clients. Partner Africa estimates that their work improved conditions for over 131,000 workers employed in international supply chains.
- Partner Africa also trained and built the capacity of over 300 local suppliers to help improve social and environmental standards in farms and factories throughout Africa.

Tru Trade

- Tru Trade provides smallholder farmers with a reliable route to market and fair prices for their produce.
- While the pandemic caused widespread disruption to Agri- business in both Uganda and Kenya, Tru Trade's two primary markets, its mobile trading and payment platforms still supported thousands of smallholder farmers to access new markets and earn an income from their produce during the year.
- To learn more and gain a deeper understanding of the challenge faced by farmers, an insight into impact survey was carried out late in 2020 amongst over 250 TruTrade client farmers in Kenya.
- The Survey highlighted the value of TruTrade for farmers in providing a unique service in an under-served market. 85% of farmers who were surveyed said that they were accessing markets through TruTrade's digital platforms for the very first time. 40% of farmers reported that their lives had 'very much improved' as a result of selling with Tru Trade.

Environment

Principle 7: Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges.

Principle 8: undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and

Principle 9: encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

Global Evergreening Alliance

- In 2021, Self Help Africa joined the Global Evergreening Alliance (GEA), a worldwide organization that has brought together leading research, technical and development practitioners committed to restoring degraded lands, improving sustainability as well as the profitability and reliability of smallholder farming systems. Two Self Help Africa representatives sit on the strategic advisory committee of GEA.

Carbon Footprint

- SHA and the wider Gorta Group are committed to a carbon neutral future for our organisation. We have undertaken a detailed audit to assess the carbon footprint of SHA and our subsidiaries and have committed to both reducing the amount of greenhouse gases we generate, and to offsetting the carbon that we do create.
- Our Merger with United purpose has strengthened and expanded the reach of our gold standard carbon financed programme. This programme provides finance that can be reinvested in projects, supporting communities most affected by climate change.
- Our carbon credits are registered and audited by the globally recognized Gold Standard. The profit from the sales is reinvested back into more water pumps and improved cook stoves. These programmes directly address four of the UN Sustainable Development Goals,
- Together with specialist partners, we have also been pioneers in the use of carbon finance to increase and sustain rural water supply services.

Tree Planting

- In Senegal, an environmental project has helped to plant thousands of mangrove trees in collaboration with local partners.
- Communities are being supported to protect and take responsibility for West Africa's under-threat mangrove forests and surrounding environment, building ecological livelihoods for local people.
- We invited small and medium sized companies across Ireland to celebrate Earth Day by planting trees to offset their carbon footprint. We worked with businesses to calculate carbon consumption and estimate the number of trees they needed to plant for offsetting purposes, together we planned to meet these carbon targets by planting trees in Africa & Ireland. <https://selfhelpafrica.org/ie/companies-can-mark-earth-day-by-planting-trees/>
- We partnered with Glenisk, an Irish Dairy brand, working to protect the environment by coming up with sustainably viable solutions for their packaging and reducing plastic. Self Help Africa partnered with Glenisk to plant 100,000 native trees in Ireland and 1,000,000 trees in Africa, helping the fight against climate change. <https://selfhelpafrica.org/ie/thanks-to-you-we-reached-a-magic-million-trees/>

Anti-Corruption

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

- SHA is committed to acting professionally and fairly in all of its dealings and relationships, employing the highest standards of openness, transparency and accountability and takes a zero-tolerance approach to fraud, bribery and corruption.
- The organisation promotes a culture of honesty and integrity, and opposes any form of fraud, bribery or corruption, understanding that fraud, bribery and corruption impact disproportionately on the poor and vulnerable by diverting resources away from intended beneficiaries, increase costs and undermine economic growth.
- SHA has a comprehensive Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption policy in place, which provides clear definitions of fraud, bribery and corruption and makes clear the responsibilities of all staff and board members with regard to preventing and reporting fraud. This is complemented by a Whistleblowing Policy and provision of an external online and telephone reporting facility to enable reporting of any concerns by anyone.
- The Board (through the Audit, Finance and Risk committee) is responsible for ensuring that proper internal controls and risk management system are in place and any incident is reported to the board.
- SHA has a clear procedure for Serious Wrongdoing Reporting and Investigation which includes initial reporting, investigation and closure procedures.

Provide commentary to companies on Communications on Progress

- Partner Africa works in partnership with global brands, ethical trading bodies, industry associations, government agencies and donors to improve the working conditions and livelihoods of vulnerable workers and producers in Africa. Partner Africa provides guidance and recommendations through research, reports, and guides.
- In 2020 Partner Africa published;
 - A beginner's Guide to Responsible Mining in Africa
 - A report on Securing workers' rights in a Covid-19 context in East African Agriculture Supply Chains.
- In 2021, SHA organised a series of new digital events and activities.
 - We held our first Women in Business webinar to hear contributions from women in Belgium, Ireland, Kenya, Norway, Uganda, and Zambia who spoke about the challenges and opportunities that existed for women in the Agri- business sector.
 - We also launched a free online course called Food for Thought which explored some of the issues, challenges, and solutions to global food production.
- SHA's Development Education team support teachers throughout Ireland via interactive workshops and resources. Our programmes focus on gender equality, sustainability and food systems, poverty eradication and climate action, featuring examples from our programmes in Africa. <https://selfhelpafrica.org/ie/education/>
 - The Development Education team delivered just under 200 workshops in total in 2021, reaching more than 3,000 students.

Copies of our Annual Reports for 2020 and 2021 can be find on our website <https://selfhelpafrica.org/ie/finances/>

Partner Africa publications can be found on the Partner Africa website <https://www.partnerafrica.org/free-resources/>

More information on Tru Trade can be found here <http://www.trustradeafrica.net/>

Part III Measurement of Outcomes:

