

19th May 2023

Communication of Engagement (COE) - BBC Media Action

To our stakeholders:

I would like to take this opportunity to renew BBC Media Action's 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 of Engagement, we describe the actions that our organisation has taken in support of the UN Global Compact and its Principles in the period June 2021 – May 2023. This report covers both actions at an organisational level, and outcomes we have seen through our project work.

We welcome any feedback from our stakeholders. More information about our work can be found on our [website](#) and in our [annual reports](#).

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Nursey
Chief Executive Officer
BBC Media Action

Introduction

BBC Media Action is the BBC's international development organisation, and we believe in the power of media and communication for good. Our vision is of a world where informed and empowered people live in healthy, resilient and inclusive communities. With our partners we reach millions through creative communication and trusted media, helping people have their say, understand their rights, responsibilities and each other, and take action to transform their own lives.

We work in more than 20 countries around the world, and last year our projects and programmes reached more than 110 million people facing poverty, inequality and insecurity with information they trust, helping to improve health, bridge divides, challenge prejudice, and save and change lives.

We follow the editorial standards and values of the BBC, and we rely on funding from donors and partners to carry out our work.

We work with a wide variety of partners, and are proud to have a number of funding partnerships, learning collaborations and engagement with UN organisations, including UN Women, Unicef, UNDP, UNHCR, UNOPS, the UN University Gender and Health Hub, and the World Food Programme.

Principles 1 and 2: Actions in respect of human rights, including safeguarding

In line with our values, BBC Media Action seeks to act with integrity, to be transparent and accountable and to put the best interests of people first in all that we do.

In January 2022 we launched our new Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Approach, with nine goals and an action plan that involves all staff around the world, so that both our organisation and our work better reflect the rich diversity of the societies in which we work, and include meaningful representation from those people who are most often marginalised by society.

Across our work and our global organisation, we do not tolerate any form of abuse, sexual or otherwise, or behaviour which puts people at risk of harm.

BBC Media Action has a range of policies, guidance and tools to protect children and vulnerable people, including a safeguarding policy, whistleblowing policy, staff code of conduct, safe recruitment guide and a standard operating procedure on reporting. The BBC editorial guidelines also contain specific sections on informed consent, respect, working with children and vulnerable adults, privacy, harm and offence. In 2022 we conducted refresher safeguarding training sessions for all staff.

Our interaction and work with our partners - as with everyone we interact with in the course of our work - is guided by our safeguarding policies. BBC Media Action conducts rigorous due diligence on

project partners to ensure they have adequate safeguarding arrangements in place and to identify any capacity needs. We provide safeguarding training for local partner staff whenever this may be needed. Larger-scale partners are contracted using BBC Media Action's partner code of ethics which clearly sets out the standards expected under the UN Global Compact.

Much of our work addresses issues of human rights. Themes of gender equality and social inclusion cut across all of our projects and programmes in 23 countries.

In Myanmar and Nigeria we are focusing on the rights of people with disabilities, including the production of Africa's first fully inclusive radio drama; in Nepal and Tanzania, we have produced content supporting women's empowerment, and to help young women and girls to make informed decisions about their social, economic and civic rights; and in South Sudan, Ethiopia and Bangladesh we are continuing to produce sexual and reproductive health and rights information aimed at young people, women and girls.

Principles 3, 4, 5 and 6: Actions in respect of labour and ethical trading

BBC Media Action subscribes to the BBC's [Ethical Trading Policy](#) which enshrines all principles of the Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code and reflects international standards set out in the ILO conventions. All staff must sign a Declaration of Personal Interests when they join BBC Media Action.

We are supportive of the BBC's [Modern Slavery Statement](#) and run our organisation responsibly, maintaining a high standard of ethical trade practices.

BBC Media Action works in line with the BBC's commitments to fostering constructive relations with its recognised trade unions. The BBC's relationship with the trade unions is guided by UK and European legislation, corporate level agreements, and employment policies. We recognise the choice of our staff to join or not to join a trade union.

We continue to publicise our Code of Conduct to all staff which sets out our expectations of ethical conduct, fair, respectful treatment for our people, and also highlights how our employees and others may raise concerns.

Many of our projects and programmes address Global Compact Principles on labour. For example, in Ethiopia, we developed a communication strategy for the Ministry of Labour and Skills, to engage, empower and motivate young people to navigate their work and life choices, tackling issues of unemployment, job creation and health; in India, our *Pathway to Respect, Identity, Dignity and Empowerment (PRIDE)* project aims to shift the negative perceptions about informal waste pickers in Bengaluru, who experience systemic marginalisation and discrimination; and in Cambodia, we developed social media content for young women entrepreneurs and those interested in starting their own businesses.

Principles 7, 8 and 9: Actions in respect of the environment

The world's poorest people feel the impact of climate change and extreme weather most, and often find it hardest to adapt and cope. BBC Media Action's work helps people to manage the risk of extreme weather events and natural hazards, and to cope with emergencies by providing practical information and ideas about ways to adapt and innovate, as well as public platforms for discussion, and debate, encouraging accountability among leaders. Our work also includes the private sector through local-level partnerships with private media organisations and journalists whom we train and mentor as part of our projects, and through partnerships with local media which carry our programming.

BBC Media Action's climate action work was highlighted at the COP26 conference in Glasgow in November 2021, where we launched a new policy note on the role of media and communication in climate action. We also created *Living Climate Change*, a series of six short films focused on the health impact of climate change on people from Nepal, Bangladesh and Kenya. These films were broadcast on BBC World and were featured on the COP26 Resilience Hub. And at COP27 in Sharm el Sheikh our new five-part podcast series *Living Climate Change Africa* brought the voices of those affected by climate change in East Africa to an international audience of policymakers.

In Kenya, through the EU funded *Down2Earth* project, we trained and mentored five radio stations in drylands areas to produce content on climate change adaptation, food insecurity and water scarcity; and developed an online course on climate change reporting for journalists in Africa. In North Africa we covered environmental and climate topics through the *El Kul* project, while our *ProSol* project focused on soil protection and rehabilitation for food security. In Tanzania, we launched *A National Conversation 5*, looking at governance with a focus on gender, climate change and civic participation. In Cambodia, we partnered with the Bophana Centre to train young individuals in documentary filmmaking, resulting in 12 documentaries that shed light on climate-related issues along the Mekong River. In Indonesia, our *Kembali Ke Hutan* project emphasised governance and sustainable green growth through a soap opera that reached millions of viewers. A follow up project in Indonesia is engaging young people on deforestation and green growth through discussion clubs and social media content.

While responding to the climate emergency is a growing priority in our programme work, we also recognise our responsibility to examine the impact of our operations on the environment. With the close support of the BBC's Sustainability team, we have implemented a process to measure the carbon footprint of all our offices worldwide, on an annual basis. The results of this exercise and an initial baseline measure taken previously, will inform the development of a decarbonisation plan later in 2023, in line with our Environmental Policy.

In the meantime, we are taking all possible practical measures to lessen our environmental impact, by minimising business travel; reducing waste and maximising recycling; cutting our use of paper and single-use plastics; using sustainable energy in our UK offices and examining our practices on use of energy, water and other natural resources, and wherever possible procuring goods and services which are environmentally responsible whilst also representing good value for money.

Principle 10: Action in respect of anti-corruption

BBC Media Action operates a zero-tolerance approach to bribery and has rolled out extensive anti-bribery training across its country offices. A whistleblowing policy provides a channel outside reporting lines to report any concerns with corruption and an independent Assurance and Risk function consisting of an Assurance and Risk Manager and an Auditor, reports directly to a Finance and Audit Committee made up of Trustees. This function provides advice, identifies risks, evaluates and improves effectiveness of internal controls and works to the Institute of Internal Auditors' standards. Staff are made aware of relevant procedures around the reporting of fraud and counter terrorism finance to donors.

In 2022 we refreshed our approach to due diligence, producing a revised policy, guidance and a set of tools to enable staff around the world to conduct robust due diligence assessments of the organisations and individuals that we partner with. This includes evaluating relevant policies, procedures and internal controls against international best practice regarding bribery, corruption and financial management; and using a new web-based system to check whether prospective partners and suppliers are subject to sanctions, asset freezes, debarments, exclusions or other legal restrictions.

Robust, trusted independent media can play a key role in driving accountability and tackling corruption and around the world. We work to further this by training local journalists and media organisations according to the editorial standards of the BBC. In some instances, our work directly tackle corruption issues.

In Nigeria, we broadcast 13 episodes of radio drama *Gatanan Gatanan Ku (Telling a Story)* on BBC Hausa, tackling issues of corruption. We also delivered social media content and town hall meetings, and worked with local journalists, in a project focused on encouraging young Nigerians to improve their civic engagement and political participation.

In Zambia, our *Ishiwi (My Voice)* initiative trained civic leaders to better engage with youth and to understand their roles and responsibilities. As a result, young people have been more engaged in decision-making and holding leaders to account. Three wards have agreed to include young people in their development meetings, and civic leaders have created an action plan to continue involving young people in community and development issues.



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For more details on this and other aspects of our work, please see www.bbcmmediaaction.org.

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