

COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT (COE)



Period covered by this Communication on Engagement
From: November 30, 2020 – November 30, 2022

Part I: Statement of Continued Support by the Chief Executive Officer

September 20, 2023

To our stakeholders:

Relief International reaffirms its continued support and commitment 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 of Engagement with the United Nations Global Compact.

In this Communication of Engagement, Relief International further details the actions that our organization has taken to support and champion the UN Global Compact and its Principles. We warmly welcome any feedback on its contents and commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders using our primary channels of communication.

Sincerely yours,



Craig Redmond
Chief Executive Officer
Relief International

Part II. Description of Actions

Specific actions that Relief International has taken in support of the Global Compact include:

Human Rights

- **Adherence to the Core Humanitarian Standards:** Relief International became a member of the CHS Alliance in 2020 after conducting a self-assessment and developing an action plan to improve its scores on the nine commitments. Relief International has taken several specific actions in 2020 and 2021 to demonstrate our commitment to the Core Humanitarian Standards while working on delivering the organization-wide improvement plan, including: Establishing technical working groups to complete Quality Benchmarks for each of our core sectors; Completing risk registers to identify critical programmatic, financial, and safety/security risks with related mitigation measures for each of our country programs; Enhancing our safeguarding policies and training curricula, and establishing safeguarding focal points in each country office to ensure proper reporting and follow-up of any reported incidents; Rolling out Relief International's Accountability to Communities framework to ensure our programs are based on communication, participation, and feedback; and Updating Relief International's guidance and review process of country complaint and feedback mechanisms to ensure they are safe and responsive. *This work supports Principle 1: businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights.*
- **Designed an Accountability to Communities Framework:** Relief International's Strategic Plan, sets out accountability and transparency as central to Relief International's culture, which includes Local Participation through the project life cycle. We work with fragile, vulnerable, mobile communities, engaging community members as participants, not recipients. As a consequence, we listen to, learn from and explain our intentions and performance to the women and men, girls and boys with whom we work, involving them as decision makers at each step of the program. Relief International's commitment to accountability to communities is codified across existing Relief International policies. We recognize that documenting codes and standards is only one step in the process and we aim to build a 'culture of accountability' through integrating our commitment across systems and practice. Practical steps, including the provision of trainings and tools outlining minimum standards, will aid staff in operationalizing the commitment. To that end, we have developed this Accountability to Communities Framework. *The Accountability to Communities Framework supports Principle 1: businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights and Principle 2: make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.*
- **Effective Complaints, Feedback, and Response Mechanisms:** Relief International recognizes the importance of establishing effective mechanisms that enable staff and communities to provide feedback and complaints. This usually occurs through an RI-led system, however where feasible, a joint complaints mechanism with other agencies may be available. These communication channels enable staff and beneficiaries to voice their suggestions and for Relief International to listen to what is working and what is not working in order to adjust the program approach accordingly. In addition to incorporating learning at the project level, Relief International recognizes the need to monitor trends regarding feedback at the institutional level for lessons incorporated into future planning. Relief International aims to adhere to the following principles to ensure complaints are welcomed and addressed. We ensure feedback mechanisms are in place in all Relief International programs. The type of feedback mechanism employed will be appropriate to the context and the kind of project. Before beginning any feedback mechanism, it is important to involve community members to determine the

best modalities for leaving feedback or complaints. We clearly communicate to community members, the system for making complaints and ensure feedback and complaints remain confidential and that community members can be confident that any issues raised are dealt with in a sensitive and prompt manner with no fear of retaliation. For those of a significant or critical nature, Relief International's Serious Incident Reporting mechanism will be used to ensure it receives due attention at leadership level. We address urgently and in line with Relief International's Serious Incident Reporting process, any complaints evaluated as serious, including those related to child protection and sexual exploitation and abuse. *The Complaints, Feedback and Response Mechanisms supports Principle 2: make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.*

Labour

- **Combatting trafficking in persons:** Relief International is committed to a work environment and operations that are free from human trafficking and exploitation. Human trafficking and exploitation are contrary to our mission. Relief International will not allow human trafficking or modern slavery in any part of our global organizations or with any of our partners. Relief International adopted a "Combatting Trafficking in Persons" policy, which sets the expectations Relief International has of its team members to avoid engagement of, complicity in, or benefitting from human trafficking. Relief International's incident reporting system is available to staff and any community member, and anyone may report concerns anonymously. *This work supports Principle 4: the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour.*
- **Combatting child labor:** Relief International, in partnership with DANIDA, launched work on holistic protection and livelihoods solutions to reduce child labor in vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugee households. Key elements of the program include value chain assessments for three municipalities and participatory planning with each municipality and the private sector to end child labor, and livelihoods case management for program participants. *This work supports Principle 5: the effective abolition of child labor.*
- **Eliminating workplace discrimination:** Relief International is committed to eliminating discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. This is embedded in our Code of Conduct, which requires that Team Members treat all colleagues with dignity and respect, to respect the rights of all individuals, including providing reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities or special needs, to reject abuse of power and any form of violence, and to make employment decisions based on an individual's abilities and merits, not personal characteristics unrelated to the job. All RI staff are required to sign and uphold an 'Equal Employment Opportunity Statement' in which they commit to adhering to the policies and processes designed to ensure transparency and fair and equitable decision making, and to the promotion of a diverse work environment. Relief International's Recruitment SOP mandates diverse panels to further reduce bias in the hiring process, and all RI staff based in both the Global and Regional Support Offices have completed mandatory unconscious bias training. *This work supports Principle 6: the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.*

Environment

- **Risk management process improvements:** Relief International has made concerted improvements to its organizational risk management by ensuring risk management efforts occur at all levels, from Boards to country offices. Notable priority improvements include the establishment of incident management and safeguarding focal point systems in each country, updates to the overall risk

management policy and related policies, such as Data Privacy, and the establishment of country level risk registers linked to the organizational risk register. Our country risk registers assess a variety of information and include risk identification, prioritization, and scoring, mitigation strategies, and ownership of each risk. *This work supports Principle 7: businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges.*

- **Promoting greater environmental responsibility:** In 2022, in an effort to be in the frontline of sustainability within the NGO sector, Relief International contracted Greenfish to support in the assessment of its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the identification of key measures for starting meaningful GHG emissions reduction efforts. Relief International also worked with InterAction's NGO steering committee to craft NGO Climate Compact, defining 2020-2022 commitments to reduce carbon footprint, water use, and waste which include education and advocacy, international programs, internal operations, and learning. Relief International also contributed to InterAction's report "Turning up the Heat," a report on how Humanitarian and Development NGOs can better integrate an understanding of climate change and environmental sustainability into their operations, organizations, and advocacy. *This work supports Principle 8: undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility.*
- **Advancing environmentally friendly technologies:** Relief International's Gyapa™ Cookstove Project provides clean, efficient cookstoves to families in Ghana. Since 2007, the project has cut 5.5 million tons of CO2 emissions with over 20,000 stoves being produced monthly and 2.5 million stoves sold in total. Overall, the project supports more than 1,000 local manufacturing and retail jobs. In addition to providing employment and income, the project invests in the training and skill development of local producers and to improve working conditions for those in the stove manufacturing process. *The Gyapa™ Cookstove Project supports Principle 9: encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.*

Anti-Corruption

- **Implementing policies against all forms of corruption:** Relief International is committed to conducting all of its business fairly, openly and honestly and in accordance with the highest ethical and legal standards. We consider all fraud, bribery and corruption to be unacceptable within the organization and with its partner organizations; and we will take disciplinary, legal or other appropriate action against those found to be involved in any such activities. Our policies and procedures are designed to minimize the risks of fraud, bribery and corruption and are regularly reviewed to ensure that effective systems are in place and enforced. We promptly investigate allegations of misconduct including financial crimes, and take corrective action where allegations are substantiated. We are also mindful of the need to implement this policy with a high degree of confidentiality, to protect reporters of abuse, as well as to protect those who may be wrongfully accused. Additionally, Relief International undergoes external financial audit annually, frequent external project audits, and regular internal audits in an effort to safeguard funds entrusted to us. Relief International's Global Assurance function was established to support the organization by monitoring levels of effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes and compliance against policies and use the outputs of its work to provide assurance to Management and the Board (through the Audit Committee). The Global Assurance function undertakes internal audits of Country Offices, functions and projects on a risk-based basis. *These actions all support Principle 10: businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.*

Part III. Measurement of Outcomes

Relief International works in 15 countries across the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Our key sectors are Health and Nutrition, Livelihoods, Education, and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH). Relief International has engaged with public and private-sector partners to advance the principles of the UN Global Compact across all its supply chain procurement mechanisms and field programs.

Our sector percentage breakdown across projects is:

- 60% Health and Nutrition
- 18% Other (Cash, Food Assistance/Protection)
- 8% Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)
- 6% Livelihoods
- 5% Multisector
- 3% Education

In 2022, we provided over 14,800,000 vital services to people across our geographical areas of implementation:

- 10,558,626 health care consultations
- 57,000 students provided with classes and/or training
- 694,000 people with increased access to clean water or sanitation services or educated on disease prevention strategies
- 26,400 people with increased income from jobs programs run by Relief International

Health and Nutrition

- 10,558,626 health care consultations provided
- 17,822 health care providers trained

Education

- 174 schools supported or rehabilitated
- 928 teachers or educators trained or supported

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

- 178,148 people with increased access to clean water or sanitation services
- 694,000 people educated on hygiene practices or disease prevention strategies

Livelihoods

- 12,994 people received job skills training
- 26,437 people with increased access to economic/job opportunities
- 16,814 women with increased income from programs run by Relief International
- 41,888 people received cash assistance

Protection

- 144,584 people received protection services

Currently, Relief International collects 15 Key Performance Indicators across the organization to monitor achievements and challenges, ensure compliance, highlight risks or gaps, and inform process improvements.