



**International Rescue Committee UK**  
100 Wood Street  
London EC2V 7AN  
TEL +44 (0) 20 3983 2710  
**Rescue-uk.org**

## **COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT (COE)**

### **Period covered by this Communication on Engagement**

From: 2022-01-23 To: 2024-01-16

### **Part I. Statement of Continued Support by the Chief Executive or Equivalent**

16 January 2024

To our stakeholders:

I am pleased to confirm that the International Rescue Committee UK 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 of Engagement, we describe the actions that IRC UK and affiliated IRC entities 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.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L Kyrke Smith', is positioned below the text 'Sincerely yours,'.

Laura Kyrke Smith  
Executive Director IRC UK



**International Rescue Committee UK**  
100 Wood Street  
London EC2V 7AN  
TEL +44 (0) 20 3983 2710  
**Rescue-uk.org**

## **Part II. Description of Actions & Part III. Measurement of Outcomes**

Since its inception, The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has continued to help people affected by humanitarian crises—including the climate crisis—to survive, recover and rebuild their lives. Founded at the call of Albert Einstein in 1933, the IRC is now at work in over 50 crisis-affected countries and communities throughout Europe and the Americas. Our UK programmes help people fleeing from war, violence and persecution in countries like Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Sudan and Iraq. We deliver lasting impact by providing health care, helping children learn, and empowering individuals and communities to become self-reliant, always seeking to address the inequalities facing women and girls.

We focus our support in five areas: ensuring [safety](#) from harm, improving [health](#), increasing access to [education](#), improving [economic wellbeing](#), and ensuring people have the [power](#) to influence decisions that affect their lives. In all our programming, we address the unique needs of [women and girls](#) (who represent the majority of those displaced)—and the barriers to progress everywhere we work.

IRC is committed to the ten principles of the UN Global Compact in human rights, labour, environment, and corruption. Our values, policies and practices are aligned with the UN Global Compact, as set out in IRC's strategy documents [Strategy100](#) and **code of conduct (The IRC Way)** and documented in our [Annual Report](#) (see [Who We Are](#) on [Rescue-uk.org](#)).

One of our core commitments is to the kind of principled partnership in action that the UN Global Compact represents – with the people and communities we serve, other humanitarian and development actors, governments, and with the private sector. IRC has built successful partnerships with the private sector that are based on joint problem-solving by equal partners. Our partnerships are comprehensive and often include employee engagement, shared technical skills and expertise, knowledge, and perspectives of the contexts in which we work, and building solutions together. Examples include:

- Our flagship partnership with **Citi Foundation** continues to go from strength to strength. With global travel restrictions easing, IRC took Citi stakeholders to visit Resilient Futures in Lebanon and meet IRC clients in person, hearing first-hand the difference the project has made. IRC and Citi Foundation have worked together to support vulnerable young people getting back on their feet through the Resilient Futures partnership. This program provides participants with business training and start-up grants. Resilient Futures operates in Greece, Germany, Cameroon, Nigeria, Lebanon, Jordan and Mexico. By the end of 2022, this partnership had supported over 5,400 young people across seven countries on the way to employment in seven countries and four continents. (**Labour**).



**International Rescue Committee UK**  
100 Wood Street  
London EC2V 7AN  
TEL +44 (0) 20 3983 2710  
**Rescue-uk.org**

- In partnership with the **IKEA Foundation**, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) launched Refugees in East Africa: Boosting Urban Innovations for Livelihoods Development (Re:Build) project in 2021. The projects seek to provide job support to 20,000 people in the urban areas of Nairobi and Kampala. The program is unique in that it will not just serve refugees, but also their neighbors in host communities, helping the two groups work together and break down barriers. It is also designed to ensure that lessons learned and best practices are documented and shared with other organisations to reach even more people. From 2022-2023, a three-armed randomised controlled trial (RCT) tested the effectiveness of mentorship on economic well-being and social cohesion on 1,570 of the Re: Build clients. Impact evaluation results for the randomised controlled trial will be available in May of 2024, at which time we will update this brief to complete the cost-effectiveness analysis results. (**Human Rights and Labour**).
- IRC has implemented the Future Makers' entrepreneurship project funded by the **Standard Chartered Foundation**. The project was delivered in Kenema, Sierra Leone and Kousséri, Cameroon, against the backdrop of poverty, gender-based violence, a lack of access to financial products and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. With funding of USD 1 million, the project sought to uplift young market stall owners - particularly women. The project's initial phase, which ran from 2021-2022, saw 93% of participants in Kenema secure access to loans and a 115% increase in average monthly household income in Kousséri. As the programme's second iteration ends, the IRC reports that 845 young people, including 84% women and girls, have been impacted. (**Human Rights and Labour**).

We constantly strengthen our policies and procedures to uphold our values and promote the UN Global Compact principles in our work and with our partners. In this Communication on Engagement, we have described some of our actions to support the UN Global Compact and its principles from January 2022 to January 2024.

## **Principles 1 & 2: Human Rights**

IRC serves the most vulnerable people in communities affected by conflict and displacement, people who are often at risk of human rights abuses. Recognising this, IRC has developed policies and procedures to ensure we comply with our commitment to Principles 1 and 2 of the UN Global Compact. For example, **The IRC Way**, our code of conduct, incorporates a suite of policies designed to protect the people we serve and our staff, including:

- Adult Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-retaliation and Reporter Protection Policy
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Combatting Trafficking in Persons Policy



**International Rescue Committee UK**  
100 Wood Street  
London EC2V 7AN  
TEL +44 (0) 20 3983 2710  
**Rescue-uk.org**

- Gender Equality Policy
- Harassment-free workplace Policy

We are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards and other humanitarian and human rights standards, including:

- Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- U.N. Secretary General's Bulletin on the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Beneficiaries

Consistent with our core values of accountability and integrity, the IRC requires a comprehensive due diligence review of a potential partner or supplier before entering into a partnership agreement to ensure that IRC understands the organization's history, relationships, past performance, reputation, and capacity. The pre-award due diligence process enables IRC to identify and appropriately manage or avert any significant risk associated with a proposed partnership, including the risk of causing harm to the communities we serve.

All IRC staff and trustees undertake annual training on the IRC Way, our Code of Conduct, which is based upon the IRC's four core values of Integrity, Service and Accountability and Equality, in addition to other trainings specifically relating to various aspects of safeguarding prevention and response. The training ensures widespread understanding of our code of conduct and key policies and procedures, including confidentiality and whistleblower protection, and provides multiple channels for confidential reporting for staff, partners and vendors; and the people we serve, including phone and email channels run by an independent third-party, EthicsPoint, which provides anonymous reports to IRC's Ethics and Compliance Unit. We also provide additional, specific training on various policies and procedures, including Anti-Sexual Harassment Training.

### **Principles 3, 4, 5 & 6: Labor**

IRC is committed to ensuring positive, equitable and inclusive work environment that supports all our employees regardless of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or national origin

. As set out in the IRC Way, this requires that staff:

- Treat all colleagues with dignity and respect
- Make employment decisions based on an individual's abilities and merits, not personal characteristics unrelated to the job
- Respect the rights of all individuals
- Provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities or special needs
- Reject any form of violence or abuse of power
- Stay aware of safety and security concerns, follow local security protocols, and stop any work that becomes unsafe
- Safeguard the confidentiality of personal information.



**International Rescue Committee UK**  
100 Wood Street  
London EC2V 7AN  
TEL +44 (0) 20 3983 2710  
**Rescue-uk.org**

Key policies and procedures that operationalize these principles include:

- Equal Employment Opportunity Policy
- Harassment-Free Workplace Policy
- Accommodation Policy
- Workplace Violence Policy
- Combatting Trafficking in Persons Policy
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Security and safety protocols

IRC has prioritized investing in our work in diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI). IRC UK recognizes our organisation's inherent biases and power imbalances, which reflect long-standing historical and colonial injustices. We also recognise the need to confront and stop the harmful practices that result from racism and discrimination at the IRC. We are determined to keep progressing in IRC UK and more widely in the IRC as part of the global IRC network. As a result, we combined the Gender Equality and the DEI workstreams, allowing us to address different systems of inequalities through an intersectional lens and set goals to increase leadership diversity. This work reiterates and expands on our IRC strategy's commitments to diversity, equality and inclusion ([Strategy 100](#)). In 2022, IRC UK launched an updated Gender, Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (GEDI) strategy (read [IRC UK Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(GEDI\) Strategy 2022 - 2024](#)). This strategy sets out how we will continue to make IRC UK a more diverse, equitable and inclusive place to work through to 2024.

### **Principles 7, 8 & 9: Environment**

IRC recognizes the critical importance of a healthy environment to our global society, economy, work, clients, employees, donors and other stakeholders. We are committed to strong environmental stewardship in our operations and programming in all of the countries in which we work, including headquarters and representative offices demonstrated by the inclusion of mitigating the impact of climate change through our programs and operations as a goal of [Strategy100](#) and as a part of our organizational mission. The IRC operates with respect for the environment by conserving and protecting natural resources, working to minimize environmental hazards, and responsibly managing energy usage.

We recognize that humanitarian programs can have a range of effects on the environment, both negative and positive, and we work to ensure that the communities we serve and the ecosystems and natural resources upon which they depend on are not put at further risk due to unintended consequences of our programs or operations.



**International Rescue Committee UK**  
100 Wood Street  
London EC2V 7AN  
TEL +44 (0) 20 3983 2710  
**Rescue-uk.org**

Our commitments are set out in the IRC Environmental Policy and include:

- Providing a safe and healthy workplace
- Ensuring the responsible use of energy throughout our operations
- Using natural resources, including raw materials, energy, and water, as efficiently as possible
- Avoiding, minimising, and mitigating adverse environmental impacts caused by our operations or programming where possible
- Acting as an environmentally responsible actor in the communities where we operate, and acting promptly and responsibly to correct incidents or conditions that endanger the health and safety of the environment

IRC aims to meet our clients' climate and environmental-related needs while also tackling the environmental impact of our operations. The [Climate Change](#) Ambition of [Strategy100](#) identifies key programmatic and operational goals to contribute to the global efforts of mitigating climate change and its impacts on the people we serve and in the geographies in which we work, particularly as a driver of displacement. The IRC helps communities respond to the changing climate by mapping climate hazards, developing early warning systems, supporting local efforts to manage natural resources and conserve water, and training people in sustainable livelihoods. We also partner with other organizations to [advocate for policy changes](#) to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lessen the effects of climate change on people with the least power and fewest resources. In addition, the ambitious [IRC climate action plan](#) has set us on a course to change how we work in order to reduce our own carbon footprint. We have also made a commitment to [reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions](#) by 2050. ( read also [How the IRC is supporting climate-hit communities](#)).

### **Principle 10: Anti-Corruption**

To achieve our mission, IRC must remain uncompromised and efficient in carrying out its work and act as a responsible global citizen. Our interactions with governments, regulators, donors, partners, vendors, the media, and the people we serve must be grounded on honesty, trust and fairness. We support the legitimate rule of law and will do our part to promote high ethical standards in the countries and communities where we work.

Our commitment to working against corruption is set out in the IRC Way and operationalized in a series of policies, procedures, and protocols, including:

- Fiscal Integrity Policy
- Organizational Gift Solicitation and Acceptance Policy
- Open Information Policy
- Supply Chain (Procurement) Standard Operating Procedures
- Finance Manuals



**International Rescue Committee UK**  
100 Wood Street  
London EC2V 7AN  
TEL +44 (0) 20 3983 2710  
**Rescue-uk.org**

- Conflict of Interest Policy for Employees
- Partnership Excellence for Equality and Results System
- Anti-Bribery Policy
- Anti-Money Laundering Policy
- Economic Sanctions and Anti-Terrorism Compliance Policy
- Export Control Policy
- Global Supply Chain Sourcing Policy