

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

12 January 2024

Dear Secretary-General

RE: Institute of Development Studies' Communication on Engagement, January 2024

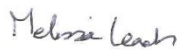
I am writing to you to reconfirm the commitment of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) to the United Nations Global Compact and its Ten Principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption.

This Communication on Engagement sets out further information on subsequent pages on how IDS is working to further the goals of the UN Global Compact.

IDS delivers world-class research, learning and teaching that transforms the knowledge, action and leadership needed for more equitable and sustainable development globally. Our reputation for research and international outlook is second to none and reflected in our performance in the latest QS World University Rankings, where we have been ranked first in the world for development studies for the seventh year in a row, together with the University of Sussex.

IDS is committed to enabling students and learners to become informed and knowledgeable leaders – individuals who can work with others to bring equitable and sustainable change to development. Our 4,000 plus alumni are a powerful force for good in the world, contributing to positive change in governments, non-profits, research institutes, businesses and elsewhere.

Yours sincerely,



Melissa Leach

Director, Institute of Development Studies

Human Rights

Promoting human rights is core to the mission of IDS. IDS has a suite of staff policies aimed at upholding human rights and the dignity of employees and those we work with. These are continually reviewed and updated in response to our external environment and employee engagement outcomes:

- An updated code of conduct setting expectations for ethical conduct, including commitments in respecting and upholding human rights
- Anti-discrimination and safeguarding policies to protect staff, partners and project beneficiaries from any forms of bullying, harassment, sexual misconduct or intimidation
- An enhanced research ethics policy and revamped committee to scrutinise research project design and ensure all research participants or actors impacted by our work are in no way harmed or exploited and that their involvement is based on mutual consent and co-design of approaches
- A standing whistleblowing policy is available to all staff, partners and volunteers, providing guidance and support in how to raise any human rights violation or concerns in confidence and with appropriate anonymity and support
- Employment practices with uphold all employee statutory rights at a minimum, including initiatives on overseas working
- All contractual and institutional agreements entered require all parties to adhere to international, national and regional legal requirements
- Our safeguarding policy and practices have been assessed by an external consultant and we have, as mandated by the Board, deployed a new safeguarding steering group which will work to identify gaps or areas of opportunity and to form an action plan to address them.

In the period since our last Communication on Engagement we have seen a steady erosion of human rights in the world, and in response, IDS is stepping up its efforts to conduct research and drive change in this area.

We have recently completed a major five-country partnership, the Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development (CREID) which highlighted how discrimination against people due to their religion or beliefs can undermine their rights, prospects and well-being – and which succeeded in bringing about practical, positive change.

An interactive nail installation, entitled ‘Nails’, has raised awareness of the linkages between the beauty industry and race, migration and trafficking. The installation was shown in several locations in Europe and pays tribute to the 39 Vietnamese migrant workers found dead in a lorry container in the UK in 2019.

Our current work to promote gender equity is spearheaded by two programmes, Countering Backlash and Sustaining Power, which examine and support struggles in countries such as Bangladesh, Brazil, Kenya and India. Our research has identified, for example, that post-pandemic, many countries have seen increased incidences of child marriage and related gender-based violence.

In 2023, we launched a Gender Equality Practitioners Community, a new peer learning network for IDS researchers, students and alumni.

Labour

IDS staff members are eligible to join one of two Unions through which we recognise the right to collective bargaining. We continue to work constructively with our Unions and have over the last period supported mutually beneficial resolutions to pension and pay disputes at the national level.

We are actively assessing our supply chains via the UK Government Modern Slavery Assessment Tool and will report on our assessment outcome via an annual modern slavery statement. We also assess partner and supplier commitment to ethical and legal labour practices through vigorous due diligence assessments. Through these assessments, we actively promote and disseminate UNGC principles and ILO standards.

In 2023, IDS commissioned our first ever external review of equality and diversity, looking holistically across ethnicity, gender and class. Subsequently, we created an organisational action plan, led by our equalities champion group and a recently recruited diversity manager, to further embed equity and diversity across all aspects of the Institutes work. We have also produced, for the first time, equity and diversity data on staff which will be monitored by management and the Board of Trustees and used as a baseline to measure performance and change going forwards.

Issues around labour are of high prominence in research work conducted by IDS. The work of the Child Labour: Action-Research-Innovation in South and South-Eastern Asia (CLARISSA) programme in Bangladesh and Nepal is providing evidence on the relationship between the worst forms of child labour and global supply chains, focusing particularly on the context of small businesses.

Through our PASTRES programme, we have learned from pastoralists about responding to uncertainty and resilience, with lessons for global challenges. Studying the livelihoods of pastoralists has been a particular focus, with one strand of research examining how pastoralists in countries such as Italy and Kenya engage with market systems.

In east Africa, our work to build more inclusive pathways to agriculture commercialisation via the Agricultural Policy Research in Africa (APRA) programme has produced tangible results. Findings from the programme informed policymaking in the rice sector and influenced the design of several important rice sector development initiatives.

In Uganda and Bangladesh, we worked with local researchers to study workplace sexual harassment, revealing that young women lack protection and security at work. The findings from 'The Gendered Price of Precarity' were shared widely through national-level dissemination events and media campaigns, generating open discussions among multiple stakeholders including local government representatives, who recognised that workplace sexual harassment is a widespread problem that needs to be addressed not only by employers, but by all stakeholders acting together.

Environment

As a partner to and recipient of UK Government funding, IDS has made an explicit commitment to reaching net zero by 2050. Over the next period, our Environmental policy will be reviewed and updated with how this will be achieved and measured going forwards.

We continue to produce annual reports on our greenhouse gas emissions and carbon footprint. Our report on 2020-2021 reported an 83% reduction in CO₂ emissions from the baseline established in the previous year. We recognise that this reduction was significantly impacted by reduced travel and new ways of remote collaboration established during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our environment champions group has established a methodology to measure greenhouse gas emissions more accurately and has formulated an action plan to continue to promote environmentally friendly programme design and operational decision making, utilising the capabilities and skills harnessed during the pandemic to retain as much environmental benefit as possible.

On the research side, we continue to examine issues related to climate and environmental justice. Our work in coastal regions of India and Bangladesh, through the now-completed TAPESTRY partnership, succeeded in engaging communities, policymakers and researchers around transformative approaches to uncertainties caused by climate change and other drivers of change.

Through a partnership entitled Brown Gold, we have helped to further understanding of how sanitation can be managed in rapidly growing urban settings to improve human welfare and protect the environment. Insights from the programme, which focuses on growing towns in Ethiopia, Ghana, India and Nepal, are being shared with policymakers, communities, non-profits and businesses to help build more viable sanitation chains.

A new centre led by IDS with partners, the Centre for Future Natures, is helping to better understand and protect commons – shared resources that are collectively governed by people. At a time when urgent efforts to tackle climate change can often result in commons being enclosed or taken away from traditional custodians, this work is revealing pathways to more democratic and ecologically sound futures.

Our work around critical minerals is revealing the extent to which increased demand for lithium and copper, as the world moves towards electrification, is affecting local communities. We showed, for example, that out of 120 active mineral mine projects in Argentina and Chile, over 50 percent are in conflict. This research has important implications on the way in which governance frameworks for natural resources need to be reimagined to be more democratic.

Anti-Corruption

IDS has in effect an anti-corruption and bribery policy which staff are inducted and trained on. We have a zero-tolerance policy toward all forms of corruption and bribery. We conduct due diligence on partners, assessing their capabilities and commitment toward ethical business practices and actively capacity build partners' capabilities and awareness of risks when deemed necessary.

The work of our Governance research cluster seeks to ensure that citizens are represented and governed fairly in a world of changing state authorities. The International Centre on Tax & Development, hosted by IDS, is working with public sector partners to further the introduction of equitable taxation policies through collaborative research and engagement. Its work is improving policies in areas such as tax compliance, climate taxation and international tax. In 2023, one research study published by IDS examined the effect of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI), on accountability, corruption and trust in Zambia.