Development Approaches Pledge

Rights Based

Rights are usually expressed in legal terminology; at Moving Mountains we want to ensure that above all compassion and the need to be loved and respected is at the heart of our work. We adopt the rights-based approach to social development, as opposed to the Charity (or Generosity) Model or the Needs based model.

In doing this we espouse the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development that *"The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realised."*

Our principles are that:

- Human rights are inalienable and cannot be taken away from someone or voluntarily given up.
- Everyone is entitled to their rights regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
- The right to education affects the right to work and the right to good health, and vice versa. This helps us to link the root causes of problems to the symptoms of the problem.
- Everyone is free to contribute to and participate in the development of their communities.
- We accept our obligation as 'duty bearers' to deliver rights to our beneficiaries and the responsibility for the impact it has on people's lives.
- We co-operate by sharing information with other duty bearers, undertaking transparent processes and hearing people's views.
- We accept our role to be driven by our obligation to protect, respect and fulfil the rights of people and to be accountable to those people in this regard.
- We hold that a person whose rights are unfulfilled, such as the right to food, education, health, participation, freedom of speech, is a poor person; therefore poverty is more than a lack of material resources but a consequence of exclusion and powerlessness.
- We don't regard development and the realisation of human rights as separate things; development is part of the process of fulfilling human rights.

Community Ownership

We work on the belief that the development of community assets contributes to a thriving civil society and ownership is a big part of community development. It's not just about owning assets such schools, community centres and renewable energy assets, it is also about the self-management of those assets and how they contribute to wider social goals, e.g. empowerment, regeneration, well-being and 'place making'.

Community means local, resident-led and usually neighbourhood-based organisations that are neither public nor private and usually operate on a not-for-profit basis. We work with a number of organisational models such as community based organisations (CBOs), village co-operatives and community development trusts. We believe that without these structures in place, most development projects fail; the issue of ownership has to be clearly agreed in the planning stages so that the community understands its responsibilities.

We have worked hard with each of our regional NGOs and the local communities to establish strong relationships based on trust and transparency. Different cultures have established ways of handling the concept of community ownership, and our role is to ensure that local voices are heard, and there is a fair distribution of influence over decisions; equally it is important to agree who will be affected by the process and the outcomes of a project.

Getting it right means agreeing on the strategic interests of a community and how everyone contributes to the aim or goal. Community ownership in itself builds trust and promotes learning and participation, and acts as a strong example for others to follow.

Gender equality

We recognise that gender equality and the empowerment of women are important goals in their own right and vital to poverty elimination, and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We underpin our work with the ethos that gender differences are socially defined and differ between countries and cultures. This means that they are not fixed and can be changed, as opposed to sex differences which are based on biology.

We also draw a distinction between equality of opportunity and equity of outcomes, and we take the view that our aim is not to promote a bias towards women, but rather an unbiased approach towards men.

"Equality of opportunity means that women and men should have equal rights and entitlements to human, social, economic and cultural development, and an equal voice in civil and political life. Gender equity means that the exercise of these rights and entitlements should lead to outcomes which are fair and just. This distinction is important because it underlines the rights of women to define for themselves the objectives of development and to seek outcomes which are not necessarily identical to those sought and enjoyed by men." (Department of International Development)

All our initiatives must demonstrate consideration of gender issues which are relevant and appropriate to the context of what we are doing. We make sure that there are no barriers or threats or risks for women or girls,and this includes disability and ethinicity. Having said that, equality does not mean that everyone has to be the same, we need to embrace diversity and the richness of human life. This means that our central tenet of empowerment and equality means equal visibility, empowerment and participation of all sexes in all spheres of life. Development at its core should be governed by both men and women.

Appropriate technology

We are mindful of what we are doing and aware of the consequences and we always look at grassroots solutions to economic needs which may change with each situation. Local solutions are highly inventive and creative, and can contribute more to the technological process than outside solutions, which is something we appreciate. Appropriate technology doesn't work with standardisations, so our approach is individual. From the start we question whether our projects can be maintained at a steady level without exhausting natural resources or causing ecological damage. It is the kind of technology that fits small-scale, grassroots, community-centred economics.

There is no doubt that appropriate technologies can offer practical solutions to a myriad of problems facing people in rural areas. This includes education at school and raising knowledge and skills levels which will promote hard skills but also address the real social factors and obstacles which people face. We employ a strategy of transferring skills and enabling access to remote areas. Our programme staffs use a 'train the trainer' mentality and do not marginalise people, with the aim of putting people on an equal footing. An equitable attitude through access to resources, expertise and technology allows us to stimulate development and improve the livelihoods of the people.

Our staffs decide on solutions using the SHTEFIE model which looks at the following factors to help communities understand and choose what is appropriate: Social, Health, Technological, Economic, Financial, Institutional and Environmental.

We also believe that technology challenges poverty in many different ways and the concepts are complex and require research and knowledge. Enabling people to earn a decent income is one of our biggest aims and this takes a long term view towards any community or individual, combining education and technology and an understanding of markets for income-generating projects. We work together with local people to help identify and solve the problems and make the most of opportunities, enabling people to build their competences and develop themselves out of poverty. Any project has to be inclusive and not just about economics; we incorporate social relationships and sharing of knowledge and ideas. By encouraging different forms of knowledge, such as written, skills or social norms, we see ourselves often as the glue that brings people together.

Micro-finance

We provide basic financial services to our beneficiaries and we sometimes provide loans to individuals. Microfinance is a well known concept nowadays, and we often provide sound financial advice and basic money management skills to people who are looking to start an enterprise. Sometimes our loans are in the form of grants to specific programmes we run, such as income-generating schemes which will help young people get off the streets and into steady work. This has been very successful for our Work Team, who were all given grants to become qualified artisans and now manage all of our projects in Kenya. They have all become entrepreneurs in their own right, while we have continued to provide work and a market. In this sense we are doing more than microfinance, we are also investing in social enterprises and capital projects in order to provide the market for labour.

We look at all of our project funding as an investment and we try to ensure that the outcome can lead to financial leverage. For example, a water well on school grounds and the loan of brick-making machine would allow the school to run a small brick business, for which we help provide the market for bricks in another location. The profits allow the school to invest in further resources like buildings and libraries. Similarly, providing hydro electric power allowed us to invest in machinery which grinds corn, allowing the village co-operative to make a profit selling flour and oil. In each case there is sustainability and financial leverage which has enabled the beneficiary to create a social benefit as well as financial gain.

Using business as a tool to work a way of out poverty is central to our thinking, and we commonly use tourism to manage this. Through our partner Adventure Alternative we use microfinance to invest in tourist facilities, and then help provide a route to market that brings external money into a community. In some areas, we have created a tourist destination from a village which is an example of sustainable growth and social entrepreneurism. Thus, the tourist dollar becomes part of the financial future of a community, and our role is to facilitate and develop that concept.

In some cases our beneficiaries have gone on to start their own businesses and benefitted financially from our visitors and the tourist potential; for example, providing facilities like transport or guiding, selling wares or services, and even making important business contacts. Our role is to facilitate these opportunities and give people the empowerment and an equitable space in which to develop and make money.

Post-2015 MDGs

We are part of the Beyond 2015 Campaign for a global civil society which aims to bring together groups from developing, emerging and developed economies in order to promote a strong and legitimate successor to the Millennium Development Goals. The Goals which came out in the Millennium year of 2000 expired in 2015 and were replaced with the Sustainable Development Goals, which underpin our work along with human rights. The Rio+20 documents talked about creating an Open Working Group mandated to prepare a proposal on SDGs for consideration by the UN General Assembly. Thousands of organisations worldwide will be part of this process that is being facilitated by the UN Development Group.

This is a very dramatic time in our history and in the history of social development, and Moving Mountains aims to be a part of this by presenting an example of empowerment and equality which has positive practical benefits to individuals and communities in the areas where we work. We aim to be progressive in our approach in order to comply with the post 2015 MDGs, which we think is only right for our staff and beneficiaries and donors. We need to ensure that vulnerable and marginalised communities also have a voice in shaping post-2015 policymaking, and we can do that by providing an insight into the realities of how people experience poverty and how they think change is possible at ground level.

Moving a mountain takes a lot of time and effort by a lot of people all working together. Changing people's attitudes towards development in terms of the future of the world sounds fanciful and probably impractical, but if everyone could contribute equally to a consensus of opinion then history shows that great things can, and indeed do, happen.

Value for Money

Value for money (VFM) is about striking the best balance between the "three E's" - economy, efficiency and effectiveness, and this is what we aim to achieve with all the money we spend on behalf of our beneficiaries and also our donors. We think about using our resources well and we are very careful in projecting figures over a long period of time so that we never have to cancel any of our programmes. Since our ethos is all about long term sustainable development we try to engage our donors in this way of thinking, rather than short term solutions.

Like any good organisation managing its finances and outcomes properly, we employ a rigorous process before every planned expenditure. The question of what the funds are supposed to achieve is as important as the amount spent, and we want to ensure that any financial assistance is valid and managed well, and that those we put in charge of development projects are always seeking to make it work better.

Fundamentally we want to know whether the money will result in our presence eventually being unnecessary, so we adopt standard concepts of impact mapping to help us make informed decisions. We are also fortunate to have Adventure Alternative covering the vast majority of our administrative costs. Nowadays there are plenty of aid sceptics who claim that aid is wasteful, and therefore it is important for us to provide clear numerical evidence for how our money is spent and what have been the outcomes. At the same time some people dismiss VFM as impractical and even inhumane. We aim to prove that the reality is somewhere between the two extremes by finding the right balance between economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

We don't monetise everything and apply a cost-benefit analysis to every expenditure. The quality of the outcomes is fundamental to understanding whether something is providing value, so we are not always looking for the cheapest option or the biggest cost saving. However we do want to reduce inefficiencies in how aid is managed so that it can achieve good development results.

The reality is that assessing value for money is not easy in a development context, partly because of getting reliable good quality data in some areas, and partly because there is a lack of consensus on value for money for whom, of what and from whose perspective. Our belief is that by properly working together with all our stakeholders and making collaborative decisions with each of the people who manage our NGO in each country, we are doing our best to ensure that all of the money in Moving Mountains is well spent.