Appointment of CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER
Welcome from the Chief Executive Officer

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief Operations Officer at Practical Action.

This is an important time for leadership in international development. In these turbulent times, the work that we do at Practical Action is needed more than ever. We are focused on continuing to increase our impact so that we support more people to lift themselves out of poverty and deal with the impacts of climate change and work effectively with partners to change the systems that keep people poor and vulnerable.

This is an enhanced leadership role in Practical Action, crucial to our continued organisational development as we navigate a rapidly changing external environment. Exemplary internal and cross-functional leadership and financial acumen will be paramount to the next phases of our journey and I am excited to be recruiting a leader who can will enable us to be the most effective organisation possible as we deliver against our mission.

We are really proud of our teams and our partners around the world whose passion and talent are second to none, and who constantly punch above their weight to deliver extraordinary results in challenging circumstances. We’d love for you to join us.

With best wishes,

Sarah Roberts
Chief Executive Officer, Practical Action
About us
We are an innovative international development group. We were founded over 50 years ago by radical economist EF Schumacher, who challenged the conventional aid thinking of the day. He believed in solutions suited to the context, equipping people with the skills and knowledge to change their situation, economic systems that work for all, and living within the planet’s means. While development approaches have changed, these founding beliefs still drive us and have more widely come of age.

We have a long history of challenging norms to change the systems that drive poverty and vulnerability. We have earned a reputation for developing innovative, community-powered solutions that achieve transformative change in peoples’ lives and livelihoods. And with broad expertise across clean energy, water, waste and sanitation, climate, agriculture, market systems, and gender issues, we integrate this expertise to solve complex and interconnected problems.

Our approach
We put ingenious ideas to work so people in poverty can change their world.

Improving lives and futures
Our work is grounded in the realities of people living in poverty. We start ‘small’ building a deep understanding of what already works at a local level, and what could be improved. We work with local communities, especially women and marginalised people, empowering them to unlock their potential and improve their lives, livelihoods and futures.

Respecting the planets boundaries
Our development approaches are designed to work with and for the environment. The natural resources that many communities rely on are increasingly under threat. Wherever possible our solutions are planet friendly, deploy renewable resources, and reuse resources in innovative ways.

Aiming for systems change at scale
We might start small, but we think ‘big’, analysing the factors that can change the underlying systems and identifying where we are best placed to effect change. And whom we can convene and collaborate with more widely - governments, international organisations, and increasingly the private sector - to help take proven solutions to the next level of scale and sustainability.
Our aims

We work across four thematic areas. Much of our most impactful work combines our expertise across issues to solve complex and interconnected problems such as supporting smallholder farmers with renewable energy to increase yields and open up bigger opportunities for the wider economy.

Harnessing energy that transforms for the one billion people without electricity, and the three billion people without clean cooking solutions. We’re supporting rural communities, displaced people, energy providers and decision makers to put clean energy to work. By 2025, our work with partners will have led to affordable, low-carbon energy access and cleaner cooking for two million people in ‘last mile’ communities and 18 million people through wider systems change.

Making cities fit for people for the millions of people living in urban slums and settlements without proper sanitation, clean water and waste services. Our work with communities is making cities in poorer countries cleaner, healthier, fairer places for people to live and work, with clean water for drinking and sewage safely contained, collected and processed. By 2025, our work with partners will have led to improved water, sanitation and waste management services for one million people living in slum communities and a further 2.4 million people through wider systems change.

Cultivating farming that works for smallholder farmers struggling to make a sufficient income and adapt to the negative effects of climate change. We’re teaming up with smallholder farmers, many of whom are women, so they can adapt to climate change and achieve a good standard of living. By 2025, our work with partners will have improved food security and incomes for two million people in rural communities and a further one million people through wider systems change.

Building resilience that protects for vulnerable people whose lives and livelihoods are threatened by climate change. We’re working to reduce vulnerability and impacts and support people to adapt so that they can continue to thrive in the future. By 2025, our work with partners will have enhanced adaptive approaches so that four million people are better protected against current and future hazards.
Our delivery model
We have offices in 11 countries across Africa, South Asia, and Latin America running a range of programmes and partnerships and our consultancy arm operates in many more. We also operate Practical Action Publishing, an independent development publishing company.

Through our development projects and programmes, we remain grounded in community realities which gives us the knowledge and credibility to be influential partners with governments, businesses, and international organisations, and to forge strategic alliances for broader systemic change. Our consulting division adds to our technical expertise, broadens the range of stakeholders we can engage with across sectors, and allows us to innovate within emerging issues. Our consulting and publishing businesses both expand our capability to broker and share ideas, evidence, and learning from all our efforts and successes.
OUR FINANCES

In 2020–2021, we raised £30.4 million, spent £26.7 million on our work, and 91p out of every £1 was spent on our programmes around the world.

Total annual income

Total expenditure on charitable activities (£m)

Donations from individuals, trusts and companies £9.7m (32%)
Legacies from people remembering us in their Will £3.7m (12%)
Grants from governments, trusts and foundations, and companies £14.1m (46%)
Consultancy work and Practical Action Publishing £2.6m (9%)
Investment & Other £0.3m (1%)

2020/21 (including fundraising and governance)

Charitable activities £26.7m (91%)
Fundraising £2.6m (9%)
ABOUT THE ROLE

We are seeking an outstanding Chief Operations Officer (COO) with a track record in financial leadership and the ability to lead management across central finance, people and culture, IT, governance, and international operations teams to help drive the delivery of Practical Action’s vision and strategy into the future.

Reporting to the CEO, the COO will be an integral member of the Senior Leadership Team, leading strategic and day-to-day operations for 600 staff around the globe to grow our impact and long-term sustainability while maintaining oversight of the organisational budget (currently c. £35million).

The scope of the role is broad and complex and involves taking responsibility for the financial sustainability of Practical Action as well as overseeing systems, risk management, and compliance across Finance, People and Culture, International Operations, and IT both in the UK and in the Country and Regional Offices. As well as strong financial and operational leadership, the strategic challenges and breadth of the work demand an adaptable person prepared to take on a wide range of tasks and responsibilities and requires creative problem-solving skills, an analytical mind, and good judgment.

As company secretary the role is responsible for a range of governance processes, and, with the CEO and key board members, for coordinating the work of the board and its committees. It also oversees the governance of a range of subsidiary entities in the UK and operating countries.

Direct reports for this role are the Heads of Department for Group Finance, International Finance, People and Culture, International Operations, Information Technology and Business Services, and the Assistant Company Secretary. The role also involves oversight of functional management relationships with country and regional office managers for finance (via the Head of International Finance), IT (via the Head of IT), any dedicated operational support and compliance roles reporting directly to Regional Directors (via the Head of International Operations), and People and Culture (via the Head of People and Culture).
Job responsibilities and accountabilities

Finance
• Lead and manage the Group and International Finance Teams and the Finance Function across the group.
• Lead development of financial strategy and viable financial plans aligned with strategic objectives.
• Oversee the delivery of the annual report and accounts for the group and subsidiary entities, the external audit, and manage the relationship with the audit partner.
• Oversee the development and maintenance of financial management and accounting policies and the implementation of accompanying systems and controls.
• Oversee the production of and interpret regular, timely, and reliable financial management reporting for senior management, the FAR committee, and the board, highlighting issues for attention.
• Understand and monitor key financial risks and ensure that appropriate mitigating actions are taken.

People and Culture (HR)
• Lead and manage the People and Culture Function across the group, including the development and progress of Practical Action’s People & Culture strategy and plans to support the wider business aims.
• Oversee the maintenance of HR policies and the implementation of accompanying systems and controls to align with the organisation’s values and meet legal and regulatory requirements.

International Operations
• Lead and manage the International Operations function across the group, developing strategies and plans for programme and award management oversight, donor and operating compliance controls and systems, and programme implementation support structures.
• Oversee and be responsible for safety and security across the group.
• Understand the risks involved in programme delivery and award management, and ensure appropriate policies and controls are in place to manage these risks in partnership with the Regional and Country Directors.

Information Technology and Business Services
• Lead and manage the Information Technology Function across the group, including developing IT strategies and plans and monitoring the implementation of these plans to deliver modern IT services to support the needs of the business.
• Understand IT, cyber-security, and data protection risks and ensure appropriate policies and controls and in place to manage these risks.

Governance
• Ensure the proper functioning of all governance arrangements for Practical Action, its subsidiaries, and controlled associates. Provide assurance to the Governance and People Committee on the adequacy of these arrangements, bringing any issues to their attention.
• To support the effective functioning of the Practical Action board and its committees, working with the CEO, chair, and committee chairs.
• Oversee the development, management, and governance of all organisational policies.
• Chair the management groups that oversees all people complaints, fraud, and financial mismanagement investigations. Ensure that serious incidents are brought to the boards’ attention and reported to the Charity Commission and other regulators as appropriate.
Other

• Contribute to Practical Action’s overall leadership and organisational development through membership of the Strategic Leadership Team and attendance at the board and sub-committees.

• Play a substantive role in the development of the organisational strategy and the developments in operational, financial, people & culture, IT, governance that will be needed to deliver it, planning and reporting on performance and progress; and ensure excellent change management processes to support their successful delivery.

• Act as employer nominated trustee for defined benefit pension scheme (closed to contributions).

• Work closely with Internal Audit, to provide adequate assurance to Directors and Trustees as to the effective functioning of the global financial, programme implementation, IT, and HR control environment.

Person Specification

• Experienced senior leader, director, or C-level individual, preferably within an international development organisation or one operating with a number of different business models.

• Exceptional managerial skills: ability to prioritise, organise, manage and deliver on complex and changing priorities; ability to lead and motivate teams; ability to influence senior stakeholders, co-create viable business solutions, and work to common agendas.

• Strong, adaptive management skills with the ability to identify and implement structural and process change as necessary, particularly in a geographically dispersed, cross-cultural organisation.

• Effective people manager: ability to lead and motivate a diverse international team and identify, attract, retain and develop high-performing staff.

• Experience in working in a complex, multi-entity, multi-currency financial environment.

• Excellent analytical reasoning abilities. Ability to think strategically and develop operational solutions to meet strategic needs.

• Exceptional technical accountancy skills and a record of achievement in financial management roles.

• Experience in working at board level.

• Extensive experience in organisational change and general management processes.

• Good understanding of modern financial systems and IT structures, use and risk.

• Understanding of programme operating environments, requirements, and risks.

• Understanding of HR practices in an international, diverse, multicultural and inclusive organisation.

• Good written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to explain complex concepts in straightforward ways and across language and cultural barriers.

• High levels of resilience and tenacity: proven ability to overcome obstacles.

• Clear commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, with a demonstrated ability to work inclusively and enhance diversity and equity within leadership, teams, and stakeholders.

• Ability to harness collective intelligence to develop and implement solutions amidst ambiguity.

Desirable:

• Qualified ACCA, ACA or CIMA accountant.

• Experience of working in international development.
To apply, please submit a CV and covering letter, detailing how you fulfil the role description to https://candidates.perrettlaver.com/vacancies/ quoting reference 5782. The deadline for applications is 9am BST Monday 23rd May 2022.

Perrett Laver will conduct an executive search process in parallel with the public advertisement of the role. Longlisted candidates will be invited to interview with Perrett Laver in early-mid June and the Selection Panel will subsequently meet to decide upon a final shortlist for the post in early July, following which, interviews with the Practical Action will take place in mid-late July.

**Location:** While we welcome candidates of all nationalities and from all locations, candidates will need to be based in and eligible to work remotely in the UK, where our headquarters is based, or in one of our offices in Bangladesh, Kenya, Nepal, Senegal, or Zimbabwe. They must be fluent in English and will undergo a mandatory basic DBS check, PEP compliance screening and training in safeguarding.

The salary for the role is commensurate with the seniority of the appointment.

**Additional Information**

We treat all applications for employment on their merits and do not take into consideration any factors that are not relevant to the job such as disability, race, age, religion, gender, gender reassignment, or sexual orientation.

Practical Action operates in accordance with its policies.
Data protection

Practical Action are committed to protecting the privacy of our supporters and stakeholders. We act in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). This is reflected in our website terms and conditions, and Privacy Policy, which together explain how we collect, manage, use and protect personal information.

Protecting your personal data is of the upmost importance to Perrett Laver and we take this responsibility very seriously. Any information obtained by our trading divisions is held and processed in accordance with the relevant data protection legislation. The data you provide us with is securely stored on our computerised database and transferred to our clients for the purposes of presenting you as a candidate and/or considering your suitability for a role you have registered interest in.

Perrett Laver is a Data Controller and a Data Processor, as defined under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Our legal basis for much of our data processing activity is ‘Legitimate Interests’. You have the right to object to us processing your data in this way. For more information about this, your rights, and our approach to Data Protection and Privacy, please visit our website http://www.perrettllaver.com/information/privacy-policy/