



RIGHTS AND WELLBEING AT WORK

RIGHTS AND RESILIENCE IN COMMUNITIES

Human Rights:

A GETTING STARTED GUIDE

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Human Rights

A GETTING STARTED GUIDE

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ABOUT THIS SERIES

This guide is part of our series of Getting Started Guides that supports your company to develop an [embedded sustainability strategy](#). Each guide tackles a specific sustainability sub-issue and explores what your company needs to do to support the resilience of the environmental and social systems around you.

In each guide, we address relevant trends, system thresholds, key concepts, key actors, and key resources. We also offer guidance on how to address the impacts of decisions and activities in your operations and value chains as well as how to develop credible goals, and outline key corporate actions and internal targets that can help to provide clarity on the work ahead.

We recommend you read the first guide in the series, [Getting Started Guides: An Introduction](#), which explains our overall approach and the value of setting a clear strategy anchored in your company's most material issues. It also explains how you can leverage process-based interim targets to clearly outline and track the specific actions that your company needs to take to achieve its high-level goals.

A complete list of focus areas and sub-issues can be found in our guide [Scan: A Comprehensive List of Sustainability Issues for Companies](#).

This guidebook addresses **Human Rights** and is intended as an introduction to the more detailed guides under the sustainability issues of **Rights and Wellbeing at Work** and **Rights and Resilience in Communities**.

1

WHY ARE HUMAN RIGHTS RELEVANT TO COMPANIES?

Companies can both positively and adversely affect human rights across their operations and decision-making, from human resources and community relations efforts, to procurement, logistics, data management, environmental management, and many other functions. Human rights can be impacted by the social and environmental footprints of a company's activities, products, and services, and by the footprints of the organisations with which the company has business relationships.

Companies, no matter their size or where they operate, are required to respect human rights, ensure the equitable treatment of workers, and prevent impacts on the human rights of those in communities. In operations and value chains, worker health and safety, compensation, unionisation, workplace culture, and more are all related to the human rights of workers. In communities, company operations can adversely impact community members' rights to land, create barriers to access to clean drinking water, a healthy environment, cultural and subsistence practices, and more.

Aside from the impacts on those directly affected, violations of human rights can also have significant consequences for businesses. Companies that cause, contribute to, or are linked to human rights impacts, whether directly or indirectly, risk exposure to operational disruptions; protests or labour action; litigation for damages; fines, sanctions, or criminal prosecution; reputational losses; refusal of investors, financing agencies, or insurance; higher cost of capital or insurance as providers seek to manage their own risk exposure; reduced market access; increased inability to attract talented employees to the company; and more.

As such, companies are increasingly expected to conduct due diligence on their operational and value chain human rights impacts, take preventative or corrective action where needed, and transparently disclose their commitments and performance.

2

WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS?

Human rights are [inherent rights](#) that we all have, simply because we exist as human beings. They are tied to human dignity – the belief that all human beings have intrinsic value and are worthy of respect.

Human rights are established in the [International Bill of Human Rights](#) and its guiding declarations and treaties. The [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) outlines the “fundamental human rights to be

universally protected.” This is accompanied by two key international treaties, the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) and the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) that describe civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights for everyone and the responsibilities of states to uphold them. At their core, human rights ensure that everyone can live a life of dignity and respect, without discrimination or deprivation.



Source: Embedding Project

These rights include: freedom from slavery, freedom of movement, the right to make a decent living that adequately provides for them and their families; the right to privacy; freedom of opinion and expression; the right to life and to safety; the right to peaceful assembly; the right to rest and leisure; and more. These rights are often, though not always, enshrined

in national law to support their implementation. As such, some of a country’s constitutional or statutory rights may overlap with human rights, but, unlike human rights, they are granted by virtue of citizenship or residency status. Citizens and residents of countries may have their own additional civil or statutory rights under their national laws.

HUMAN RIGHTS AT WORK

In the context of work, human rights aim to prevent worker exploitation by the companies they work for or sell to, as well as prevent discrimination, unfair treatment, and unsafe work.

The [International Labour Organisation \(ILO\) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#) is an expression of commitment by governments and employers' and workers' organisations to uphold basic human values including:

1. Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining
2. The elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour
3. The effective abolition of child labour
4. The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation
5. A safe and healthy working environment

Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

Freedom of association supports the right of employees to meaningfully associate in the pursuit of collective workplace goals, which includes a right to collective bargaining.

These are critical enabling rights – they underpin the realisation of other fundamental principles and rights at work by empowering the voices of workers to protect them from human rights and labour rights abuses, ensure decent work, and promote effective social dialogue.

[Freedom of association](#) refers to the right of workers to “autonomously establish and participate in groups aimed at advancing and safeguarding their occupational interests.” The right to [collective bargaining](#) is interconnected with, and an essential element of, the realisation of freedom of association. The UN Global Compact (UNGC) defines collective bargaining as “a voluntary process through which employers and workers discuss and

negotiate their relations, in particular terms and conditions of work. It can involve employers directly (or as represented through their organisations) and trade unions or, in their absence, representatives freely designated by the workers.”

Further information and guidance on freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining can be found in [Company-Worker Relations: A Getting Started Guide](#).

Elimination of All Forms of Forced or Compulsory Labour

The [ILO defines forced or compulsory labour](#) as “any work or service that is extracted from any person under the menace of any penalty, and for which that person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily.”

In company supply chains, many instances of forced or compulsory labour can be captured under the term modern slavery. [As defined by Walk Free](#), modern slavery refers to “situations of exploitation in which a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, or abuse of power.” Modern slavery includes:

- [Human trafficking](#), which involves the transportation or coercion of people to benefit from their work or services.
- [Debt bondage](#), whereby a person is forced to work to pay off a debt.
- [Forced labour](#), which refers to all work coerced from a person under threat of penalties such as violence or intimidation.
- [Child labour](#), which is defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, potential, and dignity, and is harmful to their physical and mental development.

Further information and guidance on forced and compulsory labour can be found in [Human Dignity and Integrity \(Tackling Modern Slavery\): A Getting Started Guide](#).

Abolition of Child Labour

Current efforts on the abolition of child labour focus on eliminating the worst forms of child labour as defined by [Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182](#), which include:

- All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict
- The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances
- The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties
- Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

As mentioned above, in company supply chains, child labour is included within the work to eliminate modern slavery.

Elimination of Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation

[Workers' right to freedom from discrimination](#) is a key component of the [International Labour Organization's \(ILO\) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#).

Discrimination in employment and workplaces, as [defined](#) by the UNGC, refers to "any distinction, exclusion or preference which has the effect of placing certain individuals in a position of exclusion or disadvantage in the labour market or the workplace because of their race, colour, religion, sex, disability, political opinion, national extraction, social origin or any other attribute which bears no relation to the job to be performed." This can include reduced access to employment opportunities or particular job assignments, as well

as differences in remuneration, promotions, training opportunities, security of tenure, [and more](#) based on such attributes.

Workers are also entitled to [freedom of opinion and expression](#), [freedom of thought, conscience, and religion](#), and the [right to privacy](#). There are also unique group rights, such as the [rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), and protections for persons with disabilities, women, persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities, migrant workers, LGBTQIA2S+, older workers, and other groups that outline protections against discrimination.

This category also includes just and favourable remuneration for workers. In 1948, in the [UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) established individuals' right to "just and favourable remuneration ensuring for [themselves] and for [their] family an existence worthy of human dignity." This right was ratified by the UN General Assembly in 1966 and enshrined into international law in 1976. The definition of what equates to just and favourable remuneration varies by country, cost of living, and other factors.

Further information and guidance on discrimination in respect of employment and occupation can be found in [Respectful, Equitable, and Inclusive Workplaces: A Getting Started Guide](#).

Further information and guidance on just and favourable remuneration can be found in [Fair Compensation: A Getting Started Guide](#).

A Safe and Healthy Working Environment

The right to a safe and healthy working environment is a [fundamental right](#) for workers. The requirements for a safe and healthy working environment vary greatly by industry – broadly it includes anticipating, monitoring, and preventing adverse impacts [due to the](#) "persistent threat of traditional hazards and risks, including biological, chemical, and physical hazards" that workers may be exposed while at

work and [to prompt](#) “continuous improvement of occupational safety and health to prevent occupational injuries and diseases and death.” In many countries, this right is enshrined in law through the right to refuse unsafe work, a legal protection that allows workers to stop or decline work that they deem to be unsafe.

Further information and guidance on fostering a safe and healthy working environment can be found in [Safe and Healthy Working Conditions: A Getting Started Guide](#).

HUMAN RIGHTS IN COMMUNITIES

Companies can also have an impact on the human rights and rights of Indigenous Peoples and of individuals and groups living in the communities where they operate and/or where their impacts extend. This includes the individual human rights outlined by the [International Bill of Human Rights](#) and its guiding declarations and treaties, as well as group rights, which we discuss later. Many individual human rights intersect with or underpin the realisation of other internationally recognised rights. A few key human rights in communities that companies may adversely impact are described below.



Note. This is not meant to be a comprehensive overview of all human rights but rather aims to frame your understanding of how these human rights are interlinked to the communities you or your value chain partners operate within and affect.

Right to a Healthy Environment

In recent years, as the impacts of the climate crisis have intensified, the “[right to a clean healthy, and sustainable environment](#)” has also been declared as a human right by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR). There is currently no universal definition of the right to a healthy environment, but it is understood to encompass the following substantive and procedural elements:



Source: [UN Development Programme](#)

Companies’ adverse impacts on these rights are often cumulative in nature, meaning that a company’s impacts add to the impacts of others to exacerbate them and their combined effects. Beyond the environmental impacts themselves, impacts to these rights can often also affect livelihoods, nutrition, health, and cultural practices.

Further information and guidance on the right to a healthy environment will be found in our forthcoming [Healthy Natural Spaces and Nature: A Getting Started Guide](#).

Rights to Water and Sanitation

The rights to life and health are enshrined in the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) and the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#). Derived from these rights is the [human right to access water and sanitation](#) – a critical piece in upholding the rights to life and health. The [right to water](#) “entitles everyone to have access to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible, and affordable water for personal and domestic use” and the [right to sanitation](#) “entitles everyone to have physical and affordable access to sanitation, in all spheres of life, that is safe, hygienic, secure, and socially and culturally acceptable and that provides privacy and ensures dignity.” [Key elements](#) of the right include availability, accessibility, affordability, quality and safety, and acceptability of water and sanitation for all.

Further information and guidance on the right to water and sanitation will be found in our forthcoming [Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, and Waste Management: A Getting Started Guide](#).

Certain elements of water stewardship for the realisation of water Rights are discussed across our series of [Getting Started Guides on Water](#).

Right to Housing and Land

The access, control, and use of land is [directly linked](#) to the enjoyment of economic, cultural, social, and other human rights. As [UN Habitat notes](#), “access to land is a fundamental basis for human shelter, food production and other economic activity, including by businesses and natural resource users of all kinds.” Many populations rely on land for their livelihoods, such as through farming, hunting, or food gathering. For many communities, practices, traditions, values, ways of knowing, and more cultural and social aspects are deeply interlinked with land. Land rights [underpin](#) the right to adequate housing, the right to adequate food, rights to freedom of movement and residence, and more.

Housing is a [fundamental right](#) for all, [including within it](#) “access to a safe, secure, habitable, and affordable home.” Access to housing underpins the realisation of many other rights and social functions, such as access to employment, health, and education, among others. Without it, many are unable to access other necessities for their livelihood and wellbeing.

Further information and guidance on the right to housing and land will be found in our forthcoming [Housing and Land: A Getting Started Guide](#).

Specific communities also have unique group rights – such as children, women, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, and other groups – that are enshrined through additional treaties or declarations.

Note. This is not a comprehensive overview of all unique group rights but rather aims to offer details for a few group rights to further support your company’s understanding.

Unique Group Rights of Children

[Recognising](#) that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights “proclaim[s] that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance,” the rights of children are defined and enshrined in the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). The convention applies to all humans below the age of eighteen (unless otherwise stipulated by law), and highlights key rights and protections, such as the requirement to always act in the best interests of the child, a right to an identity, and more. These rights include protection from economic exploitation of children and intersect with modern slavery and child labour protections.

Unique Group Rights of Women

Gender equality is embedded within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and further adopted through the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#), also known as the International Bill of Rights for Women.

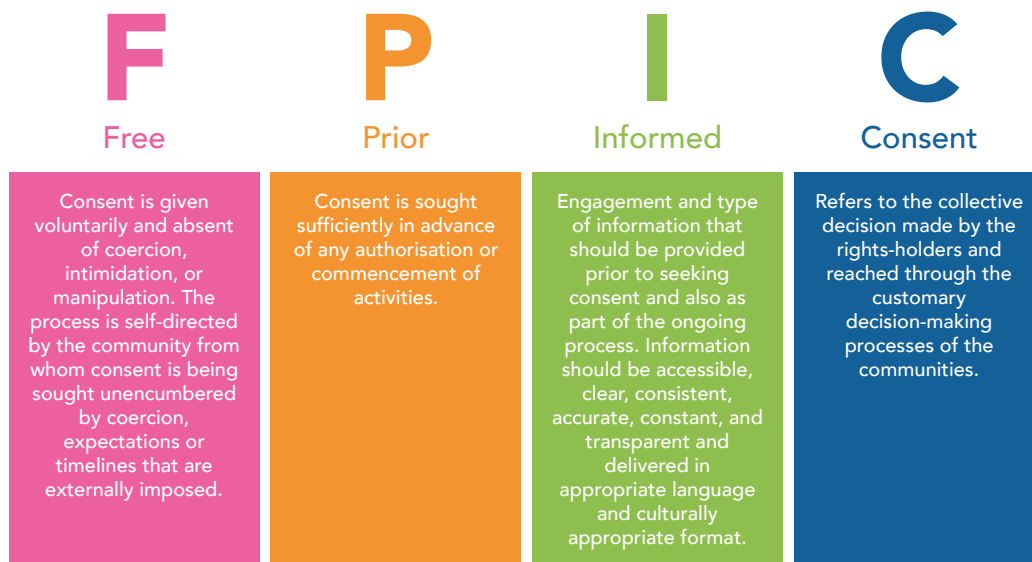
The convention defines the specific nature of gender-based discrimination and “provides the basis for realising equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life -- including the right to vote and to stand for election -- as well as education, health and employment.”

Additional declarations further support the realisation of human rights for women, such as the Beijing [Declaration and Platform for Action](#) in 1995 which emphasised women's rights as human rights, and the [Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women](#) in 1993 which recognised the “urgent need for universal application to women of the rights and principles with regard to equality, security, liberty, integrity and dignity of all human beings.”

The Unique Group Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas

Indigenous Peoples have a unique set of rights outlined in the [UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#). The Declaration describes collective and individual rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the right to self-determination and the right to autonomy or self-government, the right to be recognised as distinct peoples, rights to lands territories, resources, protections for cultural rights, and more. Crucially, it also includes the [right to free, prior, and informed consent \(FPIC\)](#), which requires “obtaining consent from Indigenous Peoples (IPs) for any activities undertaken on their land.”

Similar protections exist for rural populations and their knowledge and livelihoods as part of the unique [Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas](#).



Source: [Institute for Human Rights and Business](#)

Unique Group Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) recognises that “discrimination against any person on the basis of disability is a violation

of the inherent dignity and worth of the human person,” highlights the continued barriers persons with disabilities face in enjoying their inherent human rights, and aims to ensure that they are able to enjoy their human rights on an equal basis as others.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN VALUE CHAINS

Company value chains can adversely impact worker and community human rights in many different ways and at many different levels. This can include human or labour rights violations through direct suppliers or deep within the value chain, such as tier 3 suppliers or through layers of sub-contractors.

The human rights risks and potential impacts will depend greatly on the industry, the regions in which the value chain is located, and other factors. For example, company value chains largely located in regions with lax regulations and enforcement for worker rights, and in industries known to be vulnerable to rights violations such as textiles, will be at a higher risk of contributing to labour rights violations through their business relationships.

For many companies, these human rights are encapsulated within procurement processes.

3

WHAT ARE A COMPANY'S HUMAN RIGHTS RESPONSIBILITIES?

RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS

The [United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights \(UNGPs\)](#) outline states' obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights and fundamental freedoms, the responsibility of all business enterprises to respect human rights, and the need for appropriate and effective remedies when rights are breached.

THREE PILLARS OF THE UN GUIDING PRINCIPLES



Adapted from: [The Shift Project](#)

Pillar 1, 'Protect', outlines the duty of states to protect against business-related human rights abuses.

Pillar 2, 'Respect', explains the corporate responsibility to respect human rights throughout their operations, value chains, and all business relationships, and what this entails. Pillar 2 includes eight elements:

1. **Commit**, including developing a policy commitment that sets clear expectations for respecting human rights across your operations, value chains, and business relationships.
2. **Embed**, including the activities needed to begin implementing your policy, such as integrating respect for human rights across business processes, practices, and teams, assigning accountability, and building internal capacity.
3. **Assess**, including conducting due diligence to understand how company operations and relationships can pose risks to human rights.
4. **Act**, including taking action to address and prevent any human rights risks or impacts identified. This is largely forward-looking, including prevention and mitigation – any actual human rights impacts that are identified are addressed through a remediation processes.
5. **Track**, including measuring progress and performance on human rights in company operations and monitoring efforts in the company value chain.
6. **Communicate**, including sharing your performance and efforts with all relevant audiences such as communities, governments, investors, and more.

7. **Engage**, including undertaking meaningful stakeholder engagement to ensure your approach to human rights integrates the perspectives of those (potentially, or actually) impacted by your operations, value chain, or business relationships.
8. **Remediate**, including providing remedy for actual human rights impacts and abuses stemming from your operations, value chain, or business relationship.

Throughout these processes, the UNGPs highlight the importance of focusing on the risks to people, rather than the risk to business.

Pillar 3, 'Remedy', includes guidance on state responsibility to provide access to effective remedy for victims when human rights abuses occur, including the importance of state-based grievance mechanisms. It also [outlines the corporate responsibility](#) to participate in, or to establish, operational-level grievance mechanisms to support the identification of human rights impacts and ensure that impacts are "remediated early and directly by the business enterprise, thereby preventing harms from compounding and grievances from escalating."

It is important to note that while internationally established human rights are often enshrined in national laws, if such laws are absent or are not robust, companies are expected to adhere to – at *minimum* – internationally recognised rights to meet the expectations of the UNGPs.

ADDRESS RIGHTS INFRINGEMENTS

As encapsulated in Pillars 2 and 3, companies are expected to address any human rights impacts or abuses due to their operations, value chain, or business relationships. The process of addressing human rights infringements will depend on the nature of the company's connection to the violation – violations linked directly to operations will need to be addressed in a much different manner than those identified through business relationships.

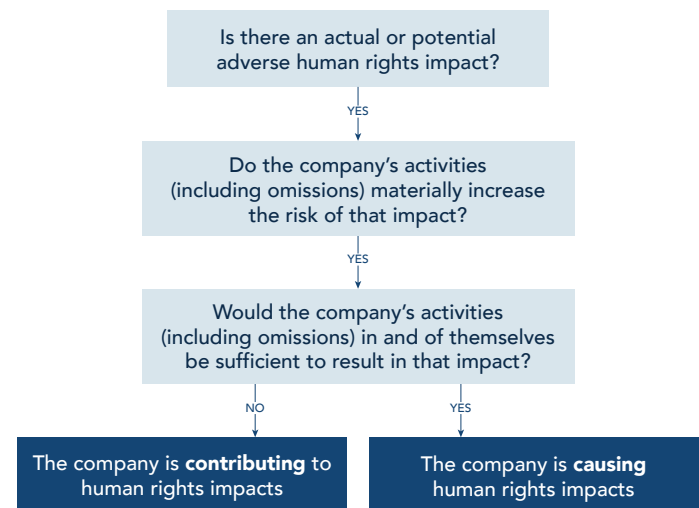
There are three key terms that are used to define the different levels of connection or involvement to a human rights infringement and associated responsibility: **causing**, **contributing to**, and **directly linked to**. While practical definitions of each are not defined in the UNGPs, an [analysis by Debevoise Business Integrity Group and Enodo Rights](#) categorises them as the following:

- **Causing** human rights impacts refers to “when [a company's] activities (including omissions) materially increase the risk of the specific impact which occurred and would be sufficient, in and of themselves, to result in that impact”
- **Contributing to** human rights impacts refers to “when [a company's] activities (including omissions) materially increase the risk of the specific impact which occurred even if they would not be sufficient, in and of themselves, to result in that impact”
- **Directly linked to** human rights impacts refers to “when [a company] has established a relationship for mutual commercial benefit with a state or non-state entity, and, in performing activities within the scope of that relationship, the state or non-state entity materially increases the risk of the impact which occurred”

While it can often be difficult to determine exactly which level of involvement, the [analysis by Debevoise Business Integrity Group and Enodo Rights](#) offers three questions to better support the practical application of the definitions:

1. Is there an actual or potential adverse human rights impact?
2. If so, do the company's activities (including omissions) materially increase the risk of that impact?
3. If so, would the company's activities (including omissions) in and of themselves be sufficient to result in that impact?

If the answer to all three is yes, then the company is **causing** human rights impacts, if the answer to the last question is no, then the company is **contributing** to human rights impacts.



Adapted from: [Debevoise Business Integrity Group and Enodo Rights](#)

PROVIDE REMEDY

A human rights remedy is a measure taken to address and rectify a human rights violation. Remedy should provide adequate, effective, and prompt reparation for harm suffered. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) highlights that “access to effective remedy is a core component of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs)” In Pillar II, Guiding Principle 22, it states that where “business enterprises identify that they have caused or contributed to adverse impacts, they should provide for or cooperate in their remediation through legitimate processes.” As such, companies have a responsibility to provide or cooperate in remediation where they, or their business relationships, have caused or contributed to impacts on individual or community human rights.

Remedy can take many different forms, from an apology and commitment to non-repetition, to compensation and restitution, and other remediation approaches in between. The remedy should be developed in collaboration with the affected party/parties and be specific to the violation. The five elements of remedy recognised in the [Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law](#), are: restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantee of non-repetition. The table below, [adapted from Business for Social Responsibility \(BSR\)](#), explains each element.

It is also important to note that there are no offsets in human rights – harm or human rights abuses **cannot** be undone through philanthropy or other approaches.

ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION
Restitution	Companies restore, to the extent possible, what has been lost and ensure rightsholders are able to return to the state before rights abuses occurred.
Compensation	Companies provide adequate monetary or other trade-off that is equal to the gravity of the harm. This should never be offered in lieu of criminal liability.
Rehabilitation	Companies provide medical, psychological, legal, and/or social services – as relevant to the infringement – to allow rightsholders to reconstruct their life and to reduce or address the harm suffered to the greatest extent possible.
Satisfaction	Companies cease the human rights violation, acknowledge the harm, disclose the truth, provide an apology, and sanction those responsible.
Guarantee of non-repetition	Companies implement policies and procedures to prevent future harms and abuses and/or take disciplinary action.

4

HOW DO COMPANIES OPERATIONALISE THESE RESPONSIBILITIES?

Once your company has recognised its responsibilities and has committed itself to respecting human rights across its operations and business relationships, these actions help to meaningfully put the commitment into practice.

ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITY

It is important to clearly assign responsibility for respecting human rights across your company. High-level accountability should reside with senior leadership and expectations for performance should be detailed. Responsibilities to operationalise respect for human rights should be clear within team roles and be formally integrated into relevant job descriptions, from HR to procurement. Establish a policy or management system framework for human rights and clarify expectations for all workers, regardless of if they are human rights related roles, such as through an internal Code of Conduct. Provide appropriate training and capacity-building where relevant to better support implementation.

Also, create similar frameworks for your business relationships, such as a supplier code of conduct or contract terms that clearly outline human rights responsibilities and expectations beyond your operations.

ESTABLISH AND OPERATE EFFECTIVE GRIEVANCE MECHANISM(S)

A [grievance mechanism](#), as defined in the UNGPs, is “a process through which grievances concerning business-related human rights abuse can be raised and an effective remedy can be sought. In practice, it is a formalised process through which the institution deals with a grievance or complaint. It includes the procedures and systems for receiving complaints of any sort and facilitating their resolution. Resolution may include steps to enable complainants to seek remedy.” Companies should establish separate grievance mechanisms for workers and the communities they operate within to ensure that they are able to raise significant issues and concerns.

Effective grievance mechanisms support the early identification of potential human rights (and other) impacts, providing companies with the opportunity to take proactive action before issues escalate or have lasting impacts. The UNGPs outline effectiveness criteria for grievance mechanisms. The table on the next page, summarised from the [UN Environment Programme Finance Initiative](#), combines criteria presented within the work of the [Equator Principles Association](#) and the [UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner \(OHCHR\)](#).

GRIEVANCE MECHANISM EFFECTIVENESS CRITERIA

Legitimate	• Designed based on engagements with workers • Independent and objective • Tailored to the level and nature of risk • Adequately resourced and supported • Designed and equipped to enable remedy
Accessible	• Reduces barriers for use • Considers additional measures for vulnerable workers • Commits to non-retaliation and to the protection of complainants • Implements measures to raise awareness about the mechanism • Does not impede the exercise of any other human rights
Predictable	• Offers clear procedures and responsibilities • Provides clear expectations about the process and outcomes
Equitable	• Ensures users are able to access and provide relevant information • Establishes a clear escalation procedure • Provides advisory, technical, and financial support
Transparent	• Clearly defines eligibility criteria for submissions • Offers regular updates on the status of the complaint • Regularly reports the performance of the grievance mechanism
Rights compatible	• Protects and aligns with internationally recognised human rights • Remedies are adequate, effective, prompt, culturally appropriate, and gender-sensitive • Consults affected workers about the remedy and how it is delivered
Continuous improvement	• Reviews performance and updates processes to improve effectiveness where needed • Supports identifying patterns or issues to inform policies, procedures, or practices in order to prevent future harm
Based on engagement and dialogue	• Benefits from engagement with workers • Dialogue is a key means of grievance resolution

Adapted from: [UNEP Finance Initiative](#)

Companies must build trust with workers and communities that they take feedback seriously and have an appropriate process to review and address issues raised. This includes predictable and transparent communication on the grievance process and taking actions towards remediation of

identified harms. Your company needs to use the insights gained from the grievance mechanism and its process, as well as feedback from those using it, as a source for continuous improvement to help you to uphold your responsibility to respect human rights.

CONDUCT DUE DILIGENCE

Human rights [due diligence](#) is a process where businesses identify, prevent, mitigate, and address their potential and actual human rights impacts. The [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights \(UNGPs\)](#) advise that human rights due diligence “should cover adverse human rights impacts that the business enterprise may cause or contribute to through its own activities, or which may be directly linked to its operations, products or services by its business relationships.” Human rights due diligence is an ongoing or iterative processes, rather than a one-off undertaking.

Your company needs to ensure that you understand industry and jurisdictional human rights risks and standards and engage in a process to identify and prioritise human rights risk in your operations and supply chains. Companies should conduct periodic risk and/or impact assessments across the full spectrum of human rights, and where areas of concern are identified, conduct in-depth investigations. Often, this process is completed by third-party experts. Human rights should be integrated into audit and departmental self-assessment schedules to better support due diligence processes.

Also, your company should conduct ongoing or periodic human rights due diligence on existing suppliers and business relationships and thoroughly screen prospective ones to better understand and identify potential impacts and risks beyond your operations. Any uncovered impacts should be addressed immediately, including through providing appropriate and effective remedy as highlighted in the UNGPs and in the previous sections of this guide.

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT HUMAN RIGHTS MANAGEMENT PLANS

Based on the actual and potential risks and impacts identified in your due diligence work, your company should design and implement a human rights management plan that outlines how you will manage these human risks and impacts. Ensure that your company outlines the work required to build internal capacity for the work ahead, strengthens grievance mechanisms, and develops any additional documents needed to put your human rights management plan into action. Ensure that the plan outlines a process to secure effective remedy and establishes processes for further monitoring and support for your operations and value chain. Set up processes to review and update the management plan as your company’s practices and approach to human rights matures.

Further information and guidance on human rights due diligence and on developing a human rights management plan can be found in [Human Dignity and Integrity: A Getting Started Guide](#).

A NOTE ON COMPANY AND CONTEXT

While your company is required to, and will need to, make a broader commitment to respect all human rights, not all human rights will be equally relevant to your organisation's human rights management plan or processes.

Depending on your industry, your size, your jurisdiction – and those of your value chain partners – and the results of your human rights risk/impact assessments, your company should prioritise those rights on which you pose risks or have potential impacts to better allocate resources and ensure accountability. Additionally, it is important to undertake fit-for-purpose due diligence to understand what is most

relevant to your company and dive more deeply into areas of risk and impact as needed. For instance, the expected actions and due diligence efforts of a small local business may be less than those of a multinational operator.

The full series of [Getting Started Guides on Rights and Wellbeing at Work](#), and the forthcoming series of **Getting Started Guides on Rights and Resilience in Communities**, are broken down into themes that support those deeper dives, but always remember that any thematic goals and strategies should be created within a broader strategy and commitment to respect all human rights.

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