

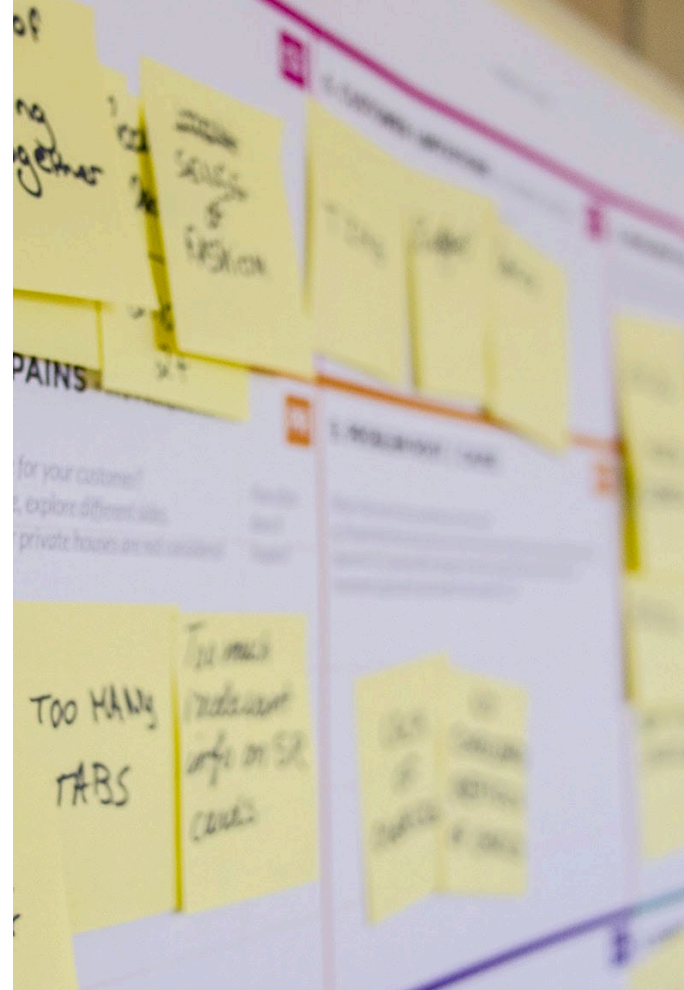


Respecting human rights in the context of COVID-19

Business & Human Rights webinar
18 March 2021

Agenda

- 1) Welcome & orientation
- 2) Setting the scene
- 3) Discussion
- 4) Closing



Webinar **logistics**

Chatham House rule

Use the information you receive today, but do not affiliate the information with the identity of the speaker(s) or other participants.

Recording

The meeting is being recorded. The recording will be shared with registered participants and made accessible to WBCSD members only (on the [Business & Human Rights Gateway](#)).

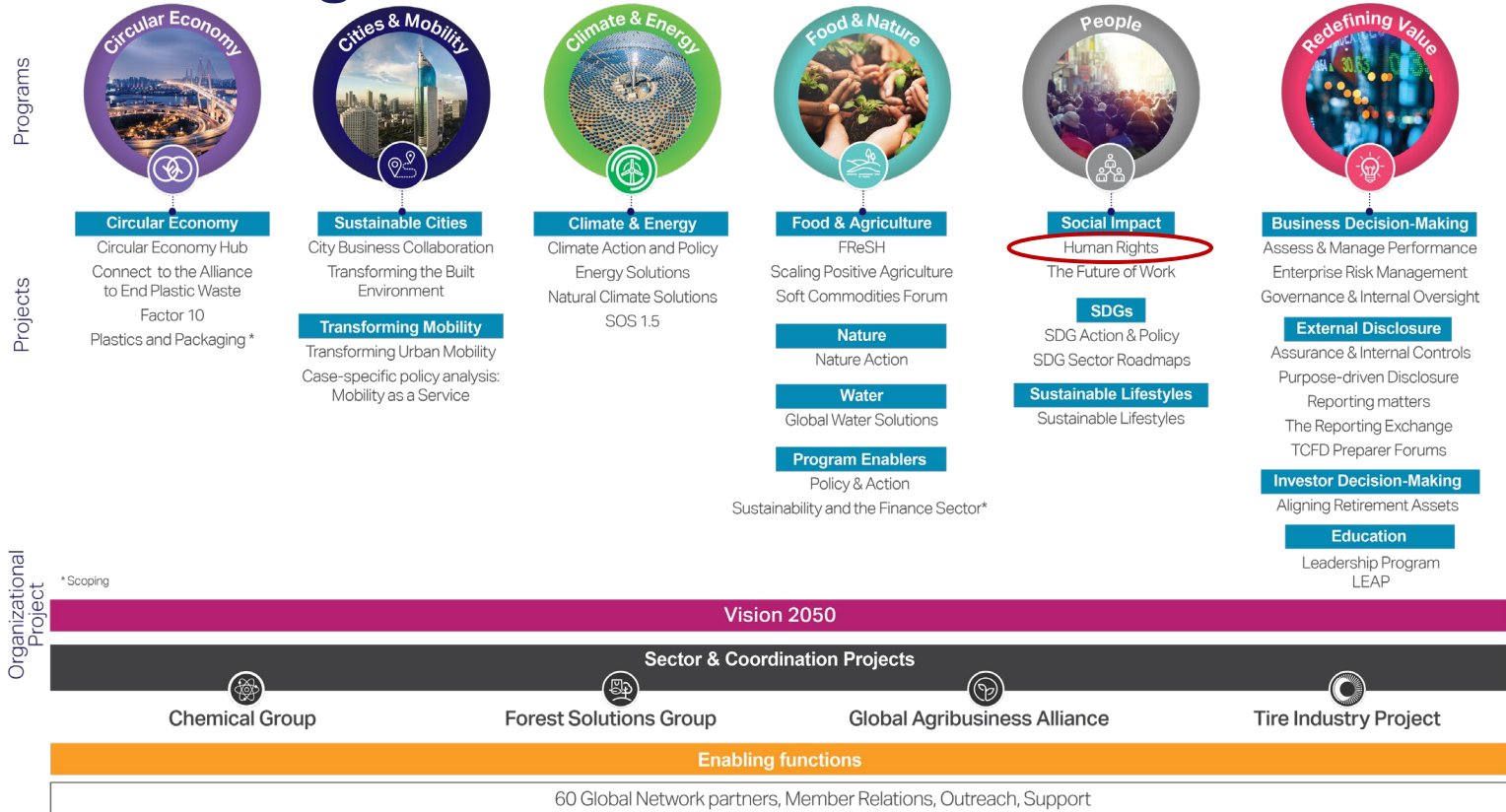
Materials & summary

The slides and a summary of key takeaways will be made shared with participants by email.

Questions & Comments

Use the chat feature to ask a question or comment.

WBCSD's Targeted Solutions



Business & Human Rights **2020/21** workstreams



CEO/ C-suite engagement

- CEO Call to Action endorsements
- CEO voices (op-eds, blogs, videos)
- CEO Guide translations



Strengthen implementation of UNGPs in business

- WBCSD member performance benchmarking
- Peer-learning workshops
- Guidance material



Inform & Inspire

- Business & Human Rights Gateway
- Webinars
- Newsletters
- Blogs

Today's **guest speakers**



Talya Swissa
Research Project Manager



Salil Tripathi
Senior Advisor, Global Issues





Respecting Human Rights in the time of Coronavirus

18 March 2021

286 WBCSD

564 225

526

526

1024 256

Salient Issues identified: 2020

- Respect rights
- Ensure access
- Eliminate racism / xenophobia
- Include everyone,
e.g. migrant workers
- Focus on women
- Protect the vulnerable,
e.g. the poor
- Limit restrictions / surveillance
- Deploy technology responsibly
- Permit dissent



Corporate Responsibility to Respect



5 of the top 10 Issues / 2021



- Supply chain – Bangladesh RMG
- Tracing and tracking
- Stranded sailors
- Wage theft
- Offices of Tomorrow – Work from Home

Impact on Migrant Workers

A blurred photograph of a modern office interior. Several people are seen in motion, walking through a space with glass partitions and desks. The lighting is dim, and the overall atmosphere is one of a busy, contemporary work environment. A clock is visible on the wall in the upper right corner.

- India's Internal Migrants
- Southeast Asia
- Gulf

Support the Supply Chain



- Know the supply chain and diversify suppliers
- Protect workers
- Explore creative solutions beyond just legal responsibilities
- Bangladesh:
 - Labor-driven
 - Women empowerment
 - Political influence
 - Brand power

Women at work

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white button-down shirt, is sitting on a light-colored couch. She has her hands pressed against her face, covering her eyes, and appears to be crying or in deep distress. The background is dark and out of focus.

- WFH concerns – DV concerns
- Caregiving responsibilities
- Mental health
- Attrition – not returning to work

CHRB findings

- 90% said they had grievance mechanism
- Few studied impacts beyond operations
- Little assessment of risks faced by the vulnerable
- Only 25% said responsible purchasing decisions taken
- Only 25% paid sick leave
- Correlation between HRDD and responsible decisions

Bad practices



- Price gouging
- Mask profiteering
- Fake cures
- False advertising
- Propaganda against vaccines
- Vaccine nationalism

Positive practices



- No *force majeure*
- Reimagine industry (hotels for essential workers)
- 3D printing ventilators
- Make PPEs and ventilators
- Merck-J&J collaboration
- Make smart phones accessible

What can be done next?



- Assess impacts and mitigate harms to the vulnerable (e.g. downsizing, access)
- Widen vaccine access; fight propaganda
- Reverse decline in women's participation in workforce
- Use technology responsibly
- Improve residential facilities for migrant workers
- Focus on mental health

Looking Ahead / 2020

- **Curbing the spread** is the only pressing priority for the world today.
- **Human imagination** will get tested as never before.
- **A united global effort** is needed to work together to ensure that the virus is slowed, while scientists work hard towards developing the vaccine that can defeat the virus.
- **Until then**, the international community has to work together by respecting the dignity of those who are affected, offering support to those who are vulnerable, protecting the rights of all, and comforting those who are hurt.

Looking Ahead / 2021

- **The pandemic has changed the world as we know it.**
- **With the vaccine rollout, before long, we will live in a different world. That old normal thrived on inequities:**
 - **of people doing truly essential work not being recognized or rewarded;**
 - **of disproportionate adverse impacts born by women and minorities; and**
 - **widening inequality.**
- **Our post-pandemic future should be an improved, humane, compassionate, and inclusive world, where everyone can enjoy their rights, and states regulate against the undermining of rights, and companies respecting and upholding their rights.**
- **The story is unfortunately not over. But we can win.**
- **We at IHRB will continue to observe, applaud those who do well, warn against those eroding rights, and cheer those who defend the rights of others.**



COVID-19 and human rights: The private sector's response to the pandemic across five sectors

Talya Swissa, Research Project Manager -
CHRB

Presentation for WBCSD Event: Respecting human rights in the context of COVID-19, 18 March 2021

Why a COVID-19 Study?

- Companies have a responsibility to respect the rights of workers and other stakeholders, in their operations and across their supply chains at all times.
- This is more essential than ever in the present climate, especially where the most vulnerable workers and communities are concerned



What the study looked at:

Areas analysed:

- Governance and policy commitment
- Human rights due diligence, with a focus on health and safety and livelihoods
- Purchasing decisions
- Remedy and grievance mechanisms

For each area, basic (own operations only) and advanced (including value chains) requirements were identified.

Methodology:

- Same 230 companies assessed in previous benchmarks.
- Initial assessment based on public sources
- Voluntary questionnaire sent to companies, with option to include information not publicly available (over 100 responses)

Key findings

- Whilst some companies took steps to protect their workers, most still need to respond to COVID-19 human rights risks and impacts in the supply chain
- Companies must tackle the issue of workers' livelihoods.
- Too many companies failed to demonstrate responsible purchasing decisions to mitigate the negative impacts on workers in supply chains.

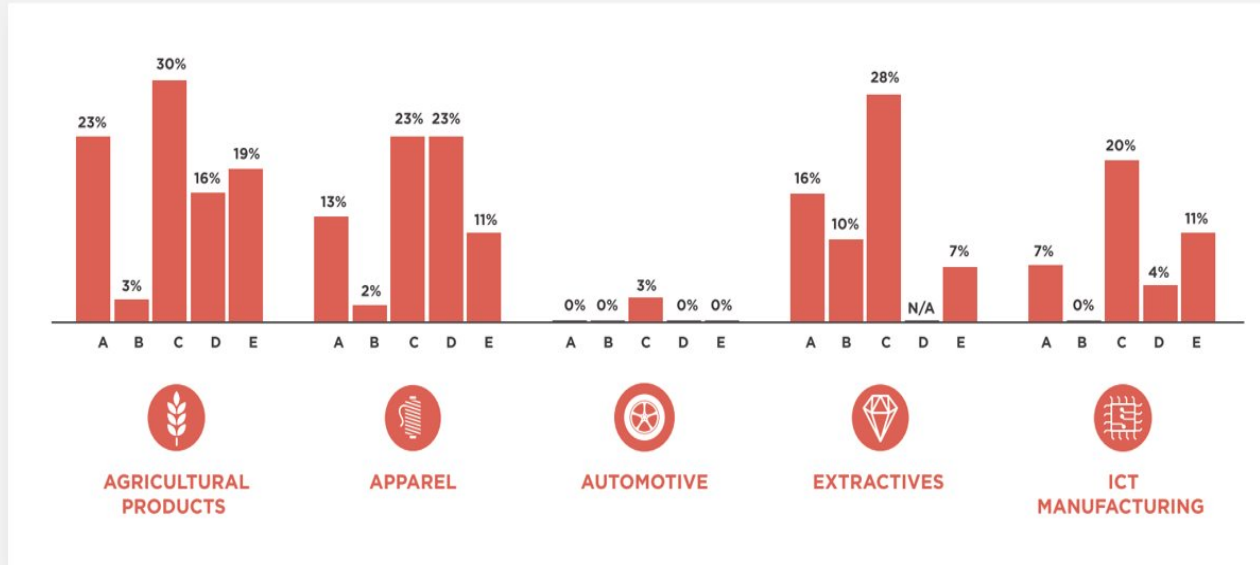


Key findings

- The majority of companies do not take particular account of human rights risks faced by vulnerable workers and local communities.
- Having effective human rights due diligence processes in place leads to better responses to the COVID crisis.



Results by sector



A. Governance and policy commitment

B. Identifying and assessing risks

C. Integrating findings and taking appropriate action (health and safety & livelihood)

D. Purchasing decisions

E. Remedies and grievance mechanisms

Leading practices



Broad adoption of some measures and leading practices by a few companies show that a good response to the pandemic is possible

- Certain basic steps to manage the human rights risks and impacts of the crisis have been widely adopted by companies. For example, 90% of companies reported having a grievance mechanism in place through which workers can raise complaints or concerns related to COVID-19 without retaliation.
- More than 60% of the companies assessed described the steps they have taken to protect the health and safety of their workers.
- Examples of best practice include consulting with worker representatives and vulnerable groups to better understand and manage the risks and impacts related to the pandemic and working with suppliers to implement a rapid response system to respond to any grievances related to COVID-19.

Conclusions

- The majority of companies, across all sectors, have failed so far to demonstrate a meaningful response to the crisis, and still have a long way to go to adequately manage the risks and impacts of COVID-19.
- Given the amount of public financial support provided by governments around the world since the beginning of the crisis, the fact that two thirds of companies failed to describe steps taken to avoid redundancies is particularly concerning.
- Certain basic steps to manage the human rights risks and impacts of the crisis have been widely adopted by companies, with a few also demonstrating leading practices. **This shows that business *can* place human rights at the heart of their response to the crisis, if they choose to do so.**



Questions & discussion

Links to studies and blogs by WBA and IHRB

[A Year Since Covid – What Can Businesses Continue To Do?](#) (IHRB)

[Top ten business and human rights issues 2021](#) (IHRB)

[COVID-19 and human rights study](#) (WBA)

Links on COVID-19 and gender

[COVID-19: How Business Can Support Women in Times of Crisis](#) (UN Global Compact)

[COVID 19: a feminist response to a global pandemic](#) (Gender & Development Network)

[Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women](#) (United Nations)

[Women's Role Key to Successful Pandemic Recovery, Deputy Secretary-General Tells Entrepreneurship Event, Citing Lopsided Impact of COVID-19](#) (United Nations)

[4 Strategies to Keep Women Working During Covid-19](#) (Inc.)

[How businesses can support women during COVID-19](#) (Everything Benefits)

[COVID-19 can undo decades of progress for women at work. Here's what can help stop it](#) (Fast Company)

[The changes that could help women stay employed](#) (BBC)

[COVID-19 and its economic toll on women: The story behind the numbers](#) (UN Women)

[Guidance note: Addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women migrant workers](#) (UN Women)

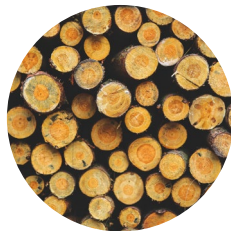
[Integrating a Gender Lens into Private Sector COVID-19 Recovery Plans \(Asia-Pacific\)](#) (BSR)

Upcoming engagement opportunities

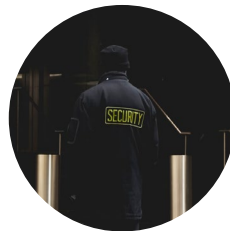
Upcoming webinars



Tuesday 6 April
Webinar: Respecting children's rights in business



Thursday 29 April
Online discussion:
Voluntary collaborative human rights due diligence initiatives



Thursday 6 May
Responsible Corporate Security Practices: A Must in High-Risk Environments



Tuesday 25 May
Tackling inequalities through corporate respect for human rights



Upcoming **peer-learning workshops**

June – October (dates will be communicated via email)

Peer learning workshop series

- UNGPs 101, HRDD in practice, Remedy
- Focus on 3 selected countries/ regions (Brazil, India/ South Asia, Southeast Asia)
- Free of charge
- Open to any function you wish to invite
- Open to members of WBCSD and/or GBI and their business partners



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Contact



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WBCSD's Business and Human Rights Gateway: Connecting companies with the dynamic human rights landscape

WBCSD and Human Rights



WBCSD's human rights project

Find out more about our work around business and human rights



CEO Guide to Human Rights

Calling for business leadership on respect for human rights.



Mapping the Business and Human Rights Landscape

Explore key developments across this space with our interactive tool



Putting People First

The 2018 edition of our analysis of progress and priorities in corporate respect for human rights



The Human Rights Opportunity

15 real-life cases of business contributing to the SDGs by putting people first

A large dark blue circle is the central focus, containing the text "Thank you. Stay safe." in white. The circle is surrounded by several smaller circles of various colors (green, teal, pink, orange, blue, grey) and images. One image shows a person in a blue protective suit and mask standing next to a car. Another image shows a computer screen with the text "COVID-19 NAVIRUS" and "RESEARCH". A third image shows a road with a building in the distance. The overall theme is related to health, safety, and technology.

Thank you.
Stay safe.