

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Extracts from the Guide for Integrating Human Rights into Business Practice

SHORT INTRODUCTION GLOBAL BUSINESS CASE STRATEGY **POLICIES**

PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES
CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY
TRACKING PERFORMANCE



GLOBAL BUSINESS INITIATIVE ON HUMAN RIGHTS
advancing human rights in business around the world



www.integrating-humanrights.org

**For further Guidance
please refer to:**



THE GUIDE TO INTEGRATING HUMAN RIGHTS INTO BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

<http://www.integrating-humanrights.org>

The Guide for Integrating Human Rights into Business Management is an online tool produced jointly by the Business Leaders Initiative on Human Rights (BLIHR), the UN Global Compact and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Now in its second edition, it offers practical guidance to companies wanting to take a proactive approach to human rights within their business operations, and is of use primarily to business leaders and managers in large and medium-sized enterprises, private and state-owned, who would like to develop their understanding of human rights in business practice.

The existing Business and Human Rights Matrix, which featured in the first edition of the Guide, has also undergone considerable revision, and is now a fully interactive tool. It is hoped that this will be of great practical assistance to companies looking to integrate or improve human rights within their companies.

The Essential Steps have been developed by BLIHR as a key component to the Business and Human Rights Matrix. The Essential Steps should be read in parallel with the Matrix tool and as a reference document for the Guide online site.

BLIHR concluded its work in March 2009 and full details of the Initiative and resources can be found at www.blihr.org.

This brief introduction is one of a series of seven extracts from the Guide to Integrating Human Rights into Business Management.

Briefs available in the series include:

- I. A SHORT INTRODUCTION**
- II. THE GLOBAL BUSINESS CASE**
- III. STRATEGY**
- IV. POLICIES**
- V. PROCESSES & PROCEDURES**
- VI. CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY**
- VII. TRACKING PERFORMANCE**

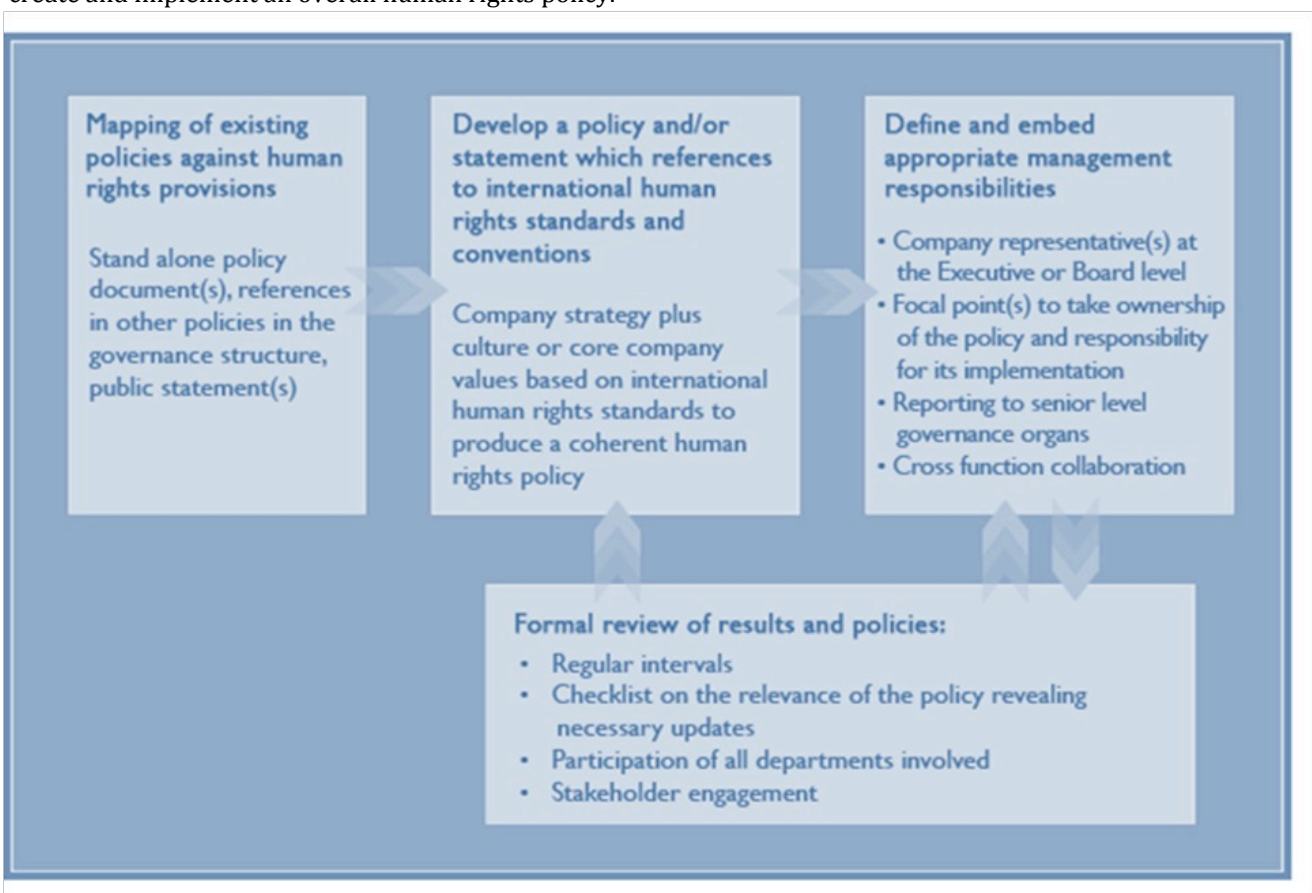
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A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES

Overview

The purpose of this section is to set out the various resources available for business managers as they seek to turn strategy into policy.

Companies should begin by performing a gap analysis to determine what is missing within policies – the **Business and Human Rights Matrix** is a helpful tool for this. Your company should then consider whether to create and implement an overall human rights policy.



Key Messages

- Policies translate the core values and strategy of a business into action
- Human rights statements can come in the form of a specific policy or a collection of references to human rights
- It is essential to ensure executive level buy-in and clear ownership within the company

Benefits

- It makes it easier to view and review your overall approach to human rights
- It helps you check policy alignment with your business's human rights strategy
- It provides an easily accessible document for your stakeholders to check your performance
- It ensures you have a public statement to frame responses to human rights questions
- It assists in developing understanding of human rights at different levels of the business

ROUGH GUIDE TO INTEGRATION

STEP 1: Identify where human rights are included in your existing policies

A policy or publicly available statement should drive the integration of human rights in the business. It should be supported by programmes and objectives throughout the organisation to ensure that it is implemented and maintained. An increasing number of businesses include human rights either as a stand-alone policy or as part of other policies in the governance structure.

The [Business and Human Rights Resource Centre](#) is a valuable resource for understanding current issues in relation to business and human rights. It lists companies that have taken the step of adopting a formal business policy statement explicitly referring to human rights.

The Business and Human Rights Matrix can assist a business in identifying where it already covers human rights under various policy areas and thereby help to create a coherent human rights policy or statement.

The advantages of bringing these together into one easily identifiable document are:

- It makes it easier to view and review your overall approach to human rights
- It helps you check policy alignment with your business's human rights strategy
- It provides an easily accessible document for your stakeholders to check your performance
- It ensures you have a public statement to frame responses to human rights questions
- It assists in developing understanding of human rights at different levels of the business

STEP 2: Develop a policy and/or statement for your business which references international human rights standards and conventions

It is important for a business to look first at its strategy and core values and then develop a human rights policy that is appropriate. A precursor is to assess the core values of the business against international human rights to ensure there is compatibility. This will help ensure the human rights policy is well integrated into the business and is not a bolt-on.

Ideally the human rights policy/public statement should:

1. Include an explicit commitment to respect human rights
2. Identify its scope relative to business operations - what it includes and what it does not
3. Outline key standards, guidelines and references (including sector specific)
4. Identify rights most relevant to your business (the Business and Human Rights Matrix can be used to assist in this process) and specify commitments under each policy area
5. Identify and signpost to other related policies e.g., supply chain, security personnel, marketing, social and environmental, health and safety, corporate governance, etc.
6. Make sure it is practical to implement and measure. It must be written in easily comprehensible language and translated as appropriate
7. Involve stakeholders in its development and periodic review.

STEP 3: Define and embed appropriate management responsibilities

A strong commitment to human rights from a business's senior leaders is a prerequisite for embedding human rights into a business's operations and activities. Support from senior leaders ensures that human rights issues are taken seriously and become part of business strategy.

There should be a sponsor for the human rights policy or statement at Executive or Board level. Additionally, there needs to be a designated individual (or individuals) within the business who owns the policy or statement and is tasked with ensuring it is fully implemented. The policy owner(s) should report to the executive level and typically may be the head of a function / department such as human resources, procurement, legal affairs, public affairs, or sustainability.

They should ensure they have sufficient resources for implementation, the results are monitored, and that it is regularly reviewed. Even the most clearly defined policies will require explanation. The policy owner(s) should act as a focal point for dealing with human rights issues that arise through implementation. There should also be access to both local and international expertise. The policy owner(s) should work with people in other business functions who are responsible for implementing it.

STEP 4: Ensure the policy implementation and results are reviewed systematically

A formal periodic review needs to be held to ensure the policy/public statement is being maintained and continues to be relevant to the business and its stakeholders. This can be done on an annual basis.

CHECKLIST

- Is the policy relevant to your business and its operations?
- Does the policy extend to all parts of the organisation and cross reference other existing policies such as health and safety, procurement, standards of business conduct and human resources?
- Have you consulted with stakeholders in the development of this policy?
- Have you reviewed other policies and business practices to ensure compatibility with this policy?
- Does the policy include a commitment to respect human rights and to avoid complicity in human rights abuses?
- Does the policy include your business's expectations of its partners, joint ventures, customers, and supply chain?
- Does the policy comply with existing international human rights conventions and norms, such as the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the rights contained in the International Labor Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work?
- Has consideration been given to tie in with existing codes and guidelines where appropriate, such as the Global Compact Principles and the International Labour Organization's Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy? A more detailed list of existing codes and guidelines is included in the Appendices.
- Have you obtained CEO sign-off on the policy?
- Have you communicated your policy widely?

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This series of brief introductions has been produced and distributed by the Global Business Initiative on Human Rights, a global business-led project committed to advancing human rights in business around the world. Launched in June 2009, the initiative provides a global platform for companies from different industrial sectors across the world to show leadership as well as providing a supportive environment in which to learn about how to respect and support human rights and integrate them into the management of their business.

The initiative is also creating regional or national platforms for companies to engage with peers on human rights issues. There are opportunities for participating companies to involve business partners, customers and suppliers in the initiative, and so provide an innovative approach to enhancing the integration of human rights into corporate value chains.

The Global Business Initiative on Human Rights benefits and builds on the lessons learnt from the Business Leaders Initiative on Human Rights (BLIHR), which concluded its work in March 2009 and, as part of its programme of work, will lead on taking forward the Guide to Integrating Human Rights into Business Management and the Human Rights Matrix to a wider audience to further promote integration of human rights into business management.

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