



GLOBAL BUSINESS INITIATIVE  
ON HUMAN RIGHTS



Overview

# Advancing human rights in a business context around the world

Peer Learning | Outreach & Capacity Building | Informing Policy



# Overview of the Global Business Initiative on Human Rights

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## INTRODUCTION

**Advancing human rights in a business context around the world**

Peer Learning | Outreach & Capacity Building | Informing Policy



The Global Business Initiative on Human Rights' (GBI) vision is that **all corporations in all parts of the world respect the dignity and rights of the people they impact and interact with.** GBI's mission is to advance human rights in a business context through cross-industry peer learning, outreach and capacity building, and by informing policy. GBI is a not-for-profit organisation led by a core group of 18 corporations from different industries, headquartered in diverse countries and with global operations.

# Global Context

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**Corporate respect for human rights is central to sustainable development.** Human rights and development are mutually reinforcing. Development supports the realisation of human rights. Failure to protect and respect human rights undermines development, including sustainable economic growth. In this context, business respect for human rights has become central to the concept of responsible business.

**Addressing human rights is a priority for leading businesses.**

Human rights risks are a major concern for business leaders, according to recent research and surveys of CEOs and senior business managers. Evidence suggests that companies see respecting human rights as a key element of good risk management – it is central to managing reputation and costs, accessing customers and capital, and ensuring alignment with good corporate values.

**Business leaders need to establish how to respect human rights.**

In 2011, the international community agreed on the ‘what’ when it comes to businesses responsibilities regarding human rights. This is set out in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Companies should have a policy commitment, act with due diligence and engage in remediation. This is not a simple task. It is akin to the organisational transformations related to health and safety, environmental management and anti-corruption that started in the 20th century. “Respect in practice” requires new approaches, rapid learning and the dissemination of good practices.

*‘During my mandate as UN Special Representative, GBI provided a community of business leaders that supported the development of the UN Guiding Principles in informed and constructive ways. Beyond being a key voice in the international policy arena, GBI is pioneering in its work to engage corporations in all regions of the world on the need to respect human rights. This is key to establishing a global level playing field, raising standards and achieving better human rights outcomes.’*

**Professor John Ruggie,  
Former UN Special Representative  
on Business and Human Rights**

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# Our Work

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**Peer Learning:** GBI provides a unique platform for peer learning on implementation of corporate respect for human rights among business leaders in diverse industries. Facilitated collaborative sharing of member company approaches, practices, tools, challenges and innovations is structured using the GBI Peer Learning Framework and directed at implementing the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. GBI's Peer Learning Framework covers six focus areas: policy, strategy and governance; integration; business relationships; human rights risks and issues; diverse geographies; and policy and legal developments.

**Outreach & Capacity Building:** GBI is a recognised leader in increasing *awareness and commitment* among the global business community, consistent with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. GBI's outreach and capacity building programme creates new opportunities for business leaders from diverse markets to share practices and challenges with each other – and especially with subsidiaries, suppliers, customers and business partners.

**Informing Policy:** GBI provides pragmatic and constructive business inputs into international and national policy developments on business and human rights. This starts with taking steps to update members and others about new policy and legal developments, then connecting stakeholders with GBI members and others in the business community. The priorities for engagement are: establishing an effective balance between government, corporate and civil society action; ensuring that strategies for scaling business uptake build on existing good practices; and promoting and informing government commitment and action in all regions of the world.



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**Advancing human rights in a business context around the world**

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*'HP has robust programmes for addressing social and environmental impacts, including industry-leading supply chain programmes. In recent years, we have focused on addressing potential human rights impacts and challenges across a wider set of operations and business relationships. This journey involves interpreting expectations set out in the UN Guiding Principles and discovering leading practices established by other industries. GBI offers a unique platform and high quality peer learning to support this journey. Equally important, GBI is a key tool for HP – and our peers – to remain connected to the latest policy and legal developments in the area of business and human rights.'*

**Zoe McMahon, Director, Social and Environmental Sustainability and Compliance, HP**

## Peer Learning

RECENT WORK

### Member workshops – Addressing diverse topics and dilemmas

In April and November 2014, GBI convened two-day member peer learning workshops in London and Jakarta. Bi-annual workshops are complemented by webinars and conference calls. Topics addressed included: human rights policy and governance; value chain risk mapping; sales-side due diligence; responding to LGBT criminalisation; land acquisition and IFC performance standards; human rights and business in occupied territories; investing in Myanmar; and key policy developments, such as the UN treaty drafting process and recently launched reporting projects.

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### Deep dive project – Tracking human rights performance

Throughout 2014, a group of GBI members embarked on a one-year peer learning inquiry into current practice in tracking human rights performance. This process will be completed in early 2015. A previous deep dive project focused on business relationships. During 2015/2016, GBI members will participate in a further deep dive project focused on remediation, including the implementation of operational-level grievance mechanisms.

*'GBI is a unique mechanism that informs and enhances Vale's human rights work. The peer learning substance, unique group culture, and input from experts offers us multiple concrete actions we can apply across the business.'*

Liesel Filgueiras, Human Rights, Indigenous Community Relations, International Community Relations, Vale

## Outreach & Capacity Building

RECENT WORK

### Engaging Chinese business leaders

Since early 2013, GBI has worked with Chinese partners to convene the first events and workshops focused on corporate respect for human rights in the country. In April 2013, GBI led a coalition of partners to organise a 200-person conference in Beijing entitled: *Sustainable Business and Investment in the Global Context: Rights, Risks and Responsibilities*. Starting in September 2013, GBI led a nine month case-based learning project convening Chinese SOEs and multi-nationals operating in China. In October 2014, GBI continued this work and is in the process of launching a long-term project entitled the *China Responsible Business Forum*. Reports about GBI's work in China are available on the website.

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### Supporting third parties to convene business

GBI is often invited to design and facilitate third party workshops to build business understanding and commitment on human rights. In the past 18 months, GBI has worked with; **the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs; CSR Asia; and the Global Compact Network India.**

*'GBI has been instrumental in supporting us to introduce the business and human rights agenda in China. We are very pleased to have an on-going working relationship with the team and GBI members. The partnership is focused on practical issues and supporting Chinese companies to build know-how in this new and important area of responsible business. Thanks to GBI, in the past two years, GCNC has also improved our capacity and skills on this topic. We are now better placed to engage our own constituents.'*

Han Bin, Executive Director, Global Compact Network China

### Business Dialogue on National Action Plans

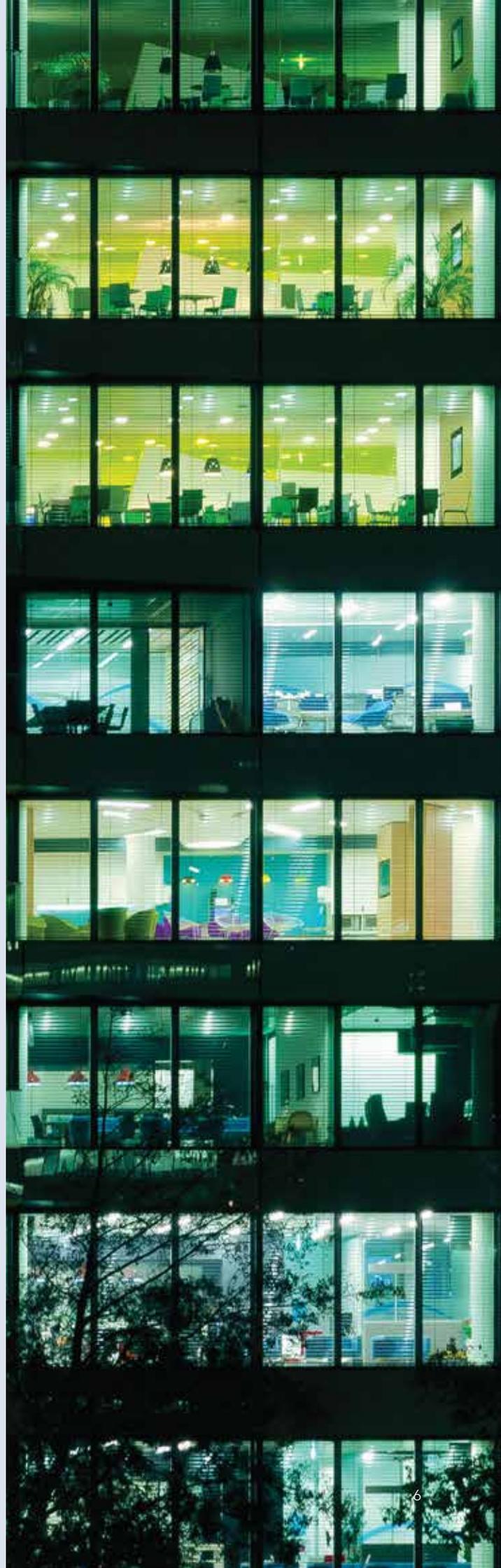
On 9th April 2014, GBI, the Danish Institute for Human Rights and the International Corporate Accountability Forum held a consultation to elicit inputs and guidance from companies on government-led national action plans on business and human rights. GBI will continue to facilitate business voices into the development of national action plans in the coming years.

### Business engagement at the United Nations

Throughout 2014, GBI actively engaged with the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights (OHCHR) to provide business input at the UN Annual Forum on Business and Human Rights. GBI supported business participants to share progress and challenges associated with integrating human rights into company policies and processes, collaborating with civil society and understanding the implications for business of the new UN process to develop an international treaty on business and human rights.

*'Governments around the world need to act on ensuring that they live up to their duties to protect human rights. The Global Business Initiative has a critical role to play in this regard through advocating for strong policies and action from governments to meet their State Duty to Protect human rights.'*

**Amol Mehra, Director, International Corporate Accountability Roundtable**



# Organisation and Network

**Business Members:** GBI is led by a core group of 18 corporations from different industries, headquartered in diverse countries and with global operations. GBI member companies have a combined work force of approximately 1.75 million employees, with millions of direct suppliers and business partners located in over 190 countries.



*'Because Sime Darby is relatively new to "human rights" GBI workshops have been invaluable in supporting us to think about our own impacts, adopt new approaches and take initial and steady steps. It is rare to be able to inform your own early decisions and direction through interaction with companies from around the world who have tried and tested policies and systems. GBI is a pragmatic forum that also accelerates our efforts.'*

Zulkifli Zainal Abidin, Executive Vice President, Group Human Resources, Sime Darby

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**Expert Secretariat:** The GBI Secretariat provides strategic direction and project management, and delivers GBI's work plan. The team has extensive experience in the field of business and human rights. The multi-disciplinary team has expertise in diverse disciplines: sustainability, human rights law and practice, corporate and regulatory law, international relations, partnership building, research, training, and facilitation.

**Governance:** GBI is governed by a Steering Group comprising five member companies' representatives that guide the strategic direction and provide operational and fiscal oversight of the initiative and its Secretariat. GBI's Governance Charter addresses topics including financial management, confidentiality, processes for new member recruitment, strategic partnerships and the role of advisors.

**External Advisory Group:** Advisors with decades of experience in the field of business and human rights support the initiative by inputting into strategic direction and participating in GBI programmes. GBI advisors have diverse expertise and are drawn from a range of leading institutions. Two GBI advisors were closely involved in the development of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

**GBI collaborates and engages with a range of institutions including the:**

- Business and Human Rights Resource Centre
- International Corporate Accountability Roundtable
- International Organisation of Employers
- Institute for Human Rights and Business
- LSE Investment & Human Rights Project
- UN Global Compact Office
- UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights
- US Council for International Business

GBI also engages with almost 50 human rights, responsible business and industry organisations around the world.

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*'As the IOE fulfills its role as the recognised voice of business in the UN, ILO, and other multilateral forums, it is critical for the work of the organisation to be informed by the range of experiences of business and human rights in practice. GBI offers such a perspective and has proven a valuable partner in raising business commitment to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights around the world.'*

**Brent Wilton, Secretary General, International Organisation of Employers**

# Benefits of Engagement

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GBI's three interrelated programmes of work are designed to holistically meet the needs and interests of leading companies as they seek to meet their responsibility to respect human rights. Businesses need to work simultaneously on implementing respect for human rights, building partnerships and knowledge, and tracking policy and legal developments. At the same time, each programme of work has distinct benefits.

## Peer Learning

Address **multiple topics on an ongoing basis** to mirror the dynamic reality of your company's human rights journey.

Access to **confidential road maps, tools, frameworks, processes and documentation** that have been designed and used by peers in diverse industries, functions and operational contexts.

**Benchmark your company's practices against established good practice** from other industries while also participating in dialogue around **emerging expectations and issues**.

**Accelerate your company's learning cycle** through honest and direct feedback on your company's management approaches and responses to dilemmas.

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*'Total has put in place a human rights programme but within GBI we learn from the strength areas of other industries. This enables us to see our own blind spots and apply new tactics and tools. A particular strength of GBI is the honesty and trust that has formed between peers. This enables very frank and open dialogue on pressing matters for Total.'*

Philip Jordan, Chairman, Ethics Committee, Total

## Outreach & Capacity Building

**Engage colleagues in priority markets** to build their own commitment to your company's human rights journey and programmes.

Form relationships and **send coherent messages to suppliers, customers, competitors and business partners** about the baseline expectation to operate with respect for human rights.

**Build local business and human rights intelligence** to support your global programme, especially through interaction with civil society experts, NGOs and human rights institutions.

## Informing Policy

**Track and plan for new policy and legal developments** by being part of a 'go to' business group for policy leaders in government and civil society.

Build **positive exposure** for your human rights commitments and practices with thought leaders and in key global forums.

Position **your company's practices as possible benchmarks** to drive third party expectations of business.

# Modes of Engagement

## Membership

Companies committing to GBI's core package for an annual membership fee benefit from the full programme of activities. As a base line this includes:

- Two company representatives to lead engagement with GBI. These representatives should be from relevant departments, such as ethics, legal, compliance, risk, sustainability, human resources, public policy, procurement. One of these individuals will have a governance link or regular interaction with the company board or CEO.
- Preparation for and participation in two meetings per year:
  - April – two-day member peer learning workshop plus one-day strategic engagement related to an emerging policy development, usually in North America or Western Europe.
  - November – two-day member peer learning workshop plus one day outreach and capacity building meeting usually in an emerging or developing market.
- Quarterly bilateral phone calls with the GBI Secretariat to discuss company progress, learning objectives and needs.

GBI members are at varying stages of their human rights journeys. Members have a mutual expectation that others in the group are progressing their own internal journey towards respect for human rights. GBI is not, nor should it be, a substitute for continued effort and evolution of member company business practices.

## Other Modes of Engagement

GBI also supports non-member companies to progress their human rights journeys. This support can occur when business leaders:

- Want to trial membership of GBI via strategic mentoring, peer learning calls, and participation in a GBI meeting.
- Need an introductory orientation to respect for human rights for senior leaders and board members.
- Seek to gain insight into a single topic via a tailored peer learning process or workshop.
- Want to involve their colleagues, business partners, suppliers and customers in GBI outreach and capacity work in diverse markets.

These modes of engagement apply the same principles as are applied to GBI core activities. Engagements are time-limited and GBI does not engage in long-term consultancy projects.

Please note that as a not-for-profit organisation, GBI also welcomes sponsorship contributions from corporate foundations and other donors that are interested in supporting the vision and work of the initiative. Donors that contribute core funding will be acknowledged on the GBI website.



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