HUMAN RIGHTS AND BUSINESS

The Department of Human Rights and Business works to promote respect for human rights in both Danish and international business. We do this through cooperation with state actors, Danish and international companies, civil society organizations and other actors.

We work with state actors to improve legislation and protection in this area in each country, and we continuously contribute to the promotion of international standards through the UN, the OECD and the EU, among others. In addition, we work with a wide range of civil society organizations, academic institutions and experts to develop tools and approaches that promote human rights in business.

To work with companies that have challenges to respect human rights is of course a dilemma in which progress one day can be overshadowed by setbacks the next. Therefore, we continually evaluate our tasks and have clear principles for our collaborative relationships with the companies.

Why we partner with companies

Advising companies is part of the Institute's statutory mandate. Companies play an important role in society by creating jobs, revenue, innovation and services needed to realize human rights. At the same time, they are responsible for ensuring that their activities do not adversely affect society or violate human rights; whether in relation to employees, consumers or in the supply chain and communities.

Unfortunately, too many people are still subject to discrimination, child labor, forced labor, poor living conditions or other human rights violations because companies do not have the will, ability or capacity to assume their responsibilities.

Therefore, there is a continuing need for companies to be both pushed and supported to improve their human rights work.
We work with companies **in several ways**

Our direct cooperation with companies can take place in different ways, but broadly speaking, the work can be divided into 3 categories:

- We enter into long-term partnerships with individual companies, where over several years we strengthen the company’s capacity to respect rights and prevent violations.
- We enter into shorter collaborations focusing on a specific issue.
- We bring together and support networks of companies that want to strengthen their work on human rights together

**What we work on** with companies

Our work to strengthen corporate respect for human rights covers virtually every aspect of corporate activity. Examples include:

- **Human Rights Impact Assessments** which map the impact of a specific project, an whole business or an entire industry from a human rights perspective. We ask: what rights are adversely affected and how can that be changed? Are workers' rights controlled or are the local people's living conditions adversely affected by the business? In this analysis, we emphasize involving these stakeholders as the company acts on these impacts, so that companies can become smarter about how their activities affect people.

- **Analysis and advice on procedures, policies and business processes**, based on international human rights. We ask: how can company policies and procedures be strengthened so that human rights are better integrated into all processes and decisions of the company?

- **Development of training material** for employees and management. Partly so that these stakeholders know their own rights, and partly so that they can integrate human rights into their daily processes and functions.
• **Monitoring and reporting.** We raise the bar for companies’ own monitoring and reporting and encourage increased openness about the challenges they face.

• **Complaints and redress.** We work with the companies on building and evaluating their complaints systems so that they are able to receive and process human rights related complaints and ensure redress for those affected.

**Principles of corporate collaboration**

When we enter into cooperation agreements with companies, this is based on a number of basic principles. The principles include:

• Companies must show a sincere willingness to promote respect for human rights in their work.

• That the Institute reserves the right to stop the cooperation if the results of the collaboration are not satisfactory.

• That we, as an independent human rights institution, do not want our name used for public promotion by the company.

• That we are public about who we cooperate with and that we encourage companies we partner with to be open and transparent.

In addition, we conduct a thorough screening prior to entering into any collaboration. Here we assess, among other things:

• The company’s motives for collaborating with the Institute. Including their history in the area and willingness to change.

• Whether cooperation can help improve the human rights situation in that area.
We have been driving this development **for more than 20 years**

Since 1999, we have been in direct dialogue with some of the world’s largest companies, and we have helped them improve. Our direct collaboration with companies enables us to work with the development of the agenda more broadly. Both then and today, we are among the key players driving global development on corporate human rights responsibilities:

- More than 20 years ago, the Institute was among the first to focus on corporate responsibility for human rights in a globalized market.

- This has since been recognized by, for example, the UN, which in 2011 adopted the UN Guidelines for Business and Human Rights, to which we contributed.

- We use the experience from our work with companies to continuously develop new methods and recommendations for states as well as corporations and civil society.

- Our methods and work are referenced and applied by the UN Global Compact, OECD, Global Reporting Initiative and other international organizations, and by the UN Working Group on Human Rights and Business and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

We **create results**

Examples from recent years include:

- **In 2016,** we conducted a human rights impact assessment on the planned activities of Eni, a multinational energy company, in Myanmar. A follow-up analysis in 2018 showed that Eni had implemented many of the Institute’s recommendations. Representatives of the local communities stated that Eni had done much to inform them about activities and impact on the local area.

- **In 2017,** we prepared an analysis of the investment fund IFU’s work on preventing and dealing with negative human rights impacts.
We recommended that IFU prepared a separate human rights policy to describe publicly how IFU meets its responsibilities for human rights. In 2019, and IFU published its first human rights policy.

- **In 2018**, we were recognized for our work on Human Rights Impacts Assessments with an IAIA Global Award. [Read more here.](#)
- **In 2018**, Nestlé was one of the first multinational companies to publish its human rights training program. [Read more here.](#)
- We have trained **56 national human rights institutions** in other countries on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and how they can work on corporate impacts on human rights and corporate responsibility.
- **23 countries have so far drawn up national action plans** for human rights and business.

**Economy**

- In the past 4 years (2015-2018) the Institute received an average of 5.8 million DKK per year in relation to its work with companies.
- That revenue represented between 3-5% of the Institute’s total turnover in the years 2015-2018.
- External audits ensure that the Institute’s work is carried out in accordance with current guidelines and the law on commercial services in public institutions.

Among other things, we ensure that the Institute's work is carried out in line with the competitive conditions under which other parties work including private players.

- Any profits from corporate collaboration go into the Institute's equity, which is used, among other things, to finance tools and methods development as well as financing future tender work.

**Want to know more?**

Please contact:
Cathrine Bloch Veiberg,
Corporate Engagement Programme Manager
cph@humanrights.dk // +45 91 32 56 19