

2015: United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights
17 November 4.30-6pm
Side Event: Concept Note

Assessing the human rights impacts of private sector projects: current challenges and innovative approaches

Collaborating partners:

- Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment (CCSI)
- The Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR)
- IPIECA, the global oil and gas industry association for environmental and social issues
- The Sciences Po Law School Clinic (Sciences Po)
- The International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM)

Background

One important element of corporate human rights due diligence, as outlined in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, is to identify and assess any actual or potential adverse human rights impacts, with the view to effectively addressing them. Processes to identify and assess these impacts may be standalone, such as a Human Rights Impact Assessment (HRIA), or integrated, for example into Environmental, Social and Health Impact Assessments. This is an evolving field; to date, a number of companies, civil society organizations, and communities have undertaken efforts to assess a project's potential or actual impacts on human rights. Whether led by companies, communities, or by multiple stakeholders, HRIAs present challenges as well as opportunities, including with respect to scoping and design, methodology, evaluation, and communication.

Session focus

This session will discuss different approaches to assessing the human rights impacts of private sector projects from the perspectives of organizations with implementation experience, as well as those that are developing new approaches or have published relevant guidance. The session will explore current practices, including a recent example of an HRIA conducted by BG Group (a member of IPIECA); consider a multi-stakeholder-led HRIA process (currently under development by CCSI, DIHR, and Sciences Po), and discuss some of the practical challenges and opportunities of the approaches put forward.

Session format and key discussion topics

This session will be moderated by Sam Szoke-Burke (CCSI), and will begin with a Q&A format with the panellists (60 minutes) before turning to questions raised by the audience (30 minutes). The panellists will address the following issues:

1. Different models and approaches for undertaking Human Rights Impact Assessments: a practitioner's perspective (Speaker: Tulika Bansal, DIHR)
2. Case study: HRIA in Myanmar (Speaker: Francesca de Meillac, BG Group, IPIECA member)
3. Opportunities for a multi-stakeholder approach (Jeremy Perelman, Sciences Po)
4. Challenges and opportunities in assessing human rights impacts (Speaker: Claire Larner, ICMM).

Information about the organizers

CCSI

The Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment (CCSI), a joint center of Columbia Law School and the Earth Institute at Columbia University, is the only university-based applied research center and forum dedicated to the study, practice and discussion of sustainable international investment. CCSI's mission is to develop practical approaches for governments, investors, communities, and other stakeholders to maximize the benefits of international investment for sustainable development. Since 2013, CCSI has had an increased focus on international investments and human rights, and has worked on human rights impact assessments, including by supporting the Carter Center and its local partners in conducting HRIAs in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

DIHR

The Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR), Denmark's National Human Rights Institution, implements human rights programmes in partnership with state institutions, civil society organizations and private actors to promote and protect human rights internationally as part of its independent legal mandate. Through research, tools and partnerships with various stakeholders, including businesses, DIHR's Human Rights and Development department seeks to maximise the positive impact and minimise the negative impact of the business community on society at large.

ICMM

ICMM is an organisation of 23 leading mining and metals companies and 35 associations that collaborate to promote responsible mining, with a shared commitment to respect people and the environment. Part of this commitment includes the requirement that members implement and measure performance against our 10 sustainable development principles including the need to uphold fundamental human rights and respect cultures, customs and values in dealings with employees and others who are affected by our activities (Principle 3).

IPIECA

IPIECA is the global oil and gas industry association for environmental and social issues. IPIECA was formed in 1974 following the launch of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). IPIECA is the only global association involving both the upstream and downstream oil and gas industry on environmental and social issues. IPIECA's membership covers over half of the world's oil production. IPIECA is the industry's principal channel of communication with the United Nations.

IPIECA helps the oil and gas industry improve its environmental and social performance by:

- developing, sharing and promoting good practices and solutions
- enhancing and communicating knowledge and understanding
- engaging members and others in the industry
- working in partnership with key stakeholders

Sciences Po Law School Clinic

The Sciences Po Law School Clinic is an experiential learning program, set within the Sciences Po Law School and articulated around local, national and global public interest projects and objectives. Masters-level students, academics and practitioners work together on a wide range of advocacy projects within the clinic's three programs, and develop integrated research based on systematic documentation and theoretical analysis of the clinical projects. The clinic's Human rights, Economic Development and Globalization (HEDG) program focuses on the promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights, the accountability of public and private actors in economic globalization, and on equitable and sustainable development.