



The UNGPs and the SDGs: Separate, Related, or Integrated?

Introductory session

27 November

09:30-11:00

Organized by Shift

Background: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are setting a new and increasingly accepted basis for companies to stake out a position on how they are responsible and sustainable. Yet with 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 related targets, there is a risk that companies simply repackage what they already do in the wrapping of the SDGs, or focus on certain SDGs based on the ease, rather than the impact, of those choices. The sheer number of targets risks a return to traditional and partial philanthropic approaches on the part of business that fail to take into consideration the social and environmental impact of a company's core operations and value chain.

Human rights are embedded throughout the SDGs. Yet many organizations that are telling business how to think about this – and many leaders in business itself – are failing to understand the place of respect for human rights in this broader framework. Respect for human rights tends to be seen as something necessary but basic, from which leading companies have already moved on to more innovative, leadership-oriented, collaborative initiatives. (This vastly overestimates progress on human rights within the business community.) Moreover, because respect for human rights is an expectation of all companies, it is often seen as merely a matter of compliance and risk management, and distinct from initiatives that are characterized as transformative.

These pervasive assumptions fail to understand:

- a) that implementing respect for human rights is an integral part of doing business, not something you do and then move on from;
- b) that implementing respect for human rights is not just a matter of compliance to be achieved simply through audit and data tracking, but instead requires capacity building, innovation, collaboration and leadership;
- c) that respect for human rights is not just a “do no harm” proposition, but drives positive change in people’s lives, with many positive outcomes for sustainable development;

- d) that this positive impact of respecting human rights can drive transformative change at scale, in particular through collaborative uses of leverage across value chains that have the power to improve the lives of millions of workers and community members;
- e) that respect for human rights must also permeate any and all other initiatives a company undertakes to contribute to the SDGs, from philanthropy to shared value initiatives, environmental projects to innovative financing, and workforce engagement to anti-corruption efforts;
- f) that respect for human rights by business is the essential key to unlock achievement of many SDGs, and without which they cannot be achieved.

Session objectives:

- To introduce an integrated way of thinking about the relationship between respect for human rights and contributions to the SDGs by business
- To explore how companies can adopt this holistic approach to the development of an SDG strategy and illustrate this kind of approach in practice
- To challenge participants to reflect on how they would like to see these connections being reinforced by business and all those who engage with them on human rights and sustainable development challenges.

Key questions:

- How does respect for human rights relate to sustainable development? Are they separate, related or interdependent?
- How can companies and those engaging with them make sense of this landscape in order to support coherence of action?

Speakers:¹

- **Caroline Rees**, President, Shift
- **Lou Nichols**, Corporate Head of Human Rights, Food Sustainability and Food Packaging, Marks & Spencer
- **Rosey Hurst**, Founder and Director, Impactt
- **Francis West**, Business Learning Program Director, Shift

Session format and content:

- **Brief opening presentation** on how corporate respect for human rights extends beyond 'doing no harm' and holds the power to transform lives and help meet SDG targets.
- **A conversation with an individual company and an informed third party** to translate the theory of these connections into practical realities, looking at a number of the company's initiatives, aims, and ambitions through its human rights work.
- **An audience exercise:** taking a few targets under 3 selected SDGs, groups will brainstorm how company efforts to tackle human rights risks in their business can make substantial contributions to one or more of the targets identified. A sample of conclusions will be discussed by the audience as a whole.

¹ Further information on speakers provided in Annex

ANNEX. SPEAKERS SHORT BIOS.

Francis West

Business Learning Program Director, Shift

Francis West is the Business Learning Program Director at Shift, the leading center of expertise on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. At Shift, Francis oversees Shift's work providing expert advice to a select group of companies that are serious about doing business with respect for human rights. Prior to joining Shift, Francis engaged with businesses and governments on human rights at Unicef UK, Save the Children and Malaria. He is a graduate of the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Caroline Rees

President, Shift

Caroline Rees is the President and Co-Founder of the non-profit Shift, where she leads strategic development and drives thought leadership work on key challenges and opportunities in advancing corporate respect for business and human rights. Prior to founding Shift, Caroline was a lead advisor to Professor John Ruggie during his work to develop the UN Guiding Principles as Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General. From 2009 to 2011 she was Director of the Governance and Accountability Program at the Harvard Kennedy School's Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative, before which she spent 14 years as a British diplomat.

Lou Nicholls

Corporate Head of Human Rights, Food Sustainability and Food Packaging, Marks & Spencer

Louise Nicholls is Corporate Head of Human Rights, Food sustainability and Food Packaging at M&S. She leads the strategic Human rights (and modern slavery) agenda working across the different business areas to support their local teams develop implementation plans. To date M&S have published 2 Human Rights reports and 2 modern slavery statements reflecting a business focused and determined to embed respect for human rights in how they do business.

Rosey Hurst

Founder and Director, Impactt

Rose Hurst founded Impactt in 1997 with the mission of improving the performance of international supply chains in improving workers' rights. At Impactt she has used her experience of the developing world and the corporate and NGO sectors to innovate a wide range of tools, solutions and services to make a positive impact on workers in supply chains. Hurst has led many innovations in ethical trade, founding Sedex and the Local Resources Network, pioneering and normalising the use of participatory techniques in China, devising and rolling out the Benefits for Business and Workers Programme in India, Bangladesh and Myanmar, working with Awaj Foundation on building workers' negotiation capability, and using techniques derived from social psychology to re-humanise relations in the workplace.