Business Human Rights Project
Human Rights Issues Affected by Businesses

- The right to freedom of assembly and association
- The right to freedom of expression
- The abolition of slavery and forced labor
- The abolition of child labor
- The right to just and favorable remuneration
- The right of indigenous peoples to possession of ancestral lands and resources
Some human rights are particularly relevant in the business context:

**Freedom of association** – trade unions suppressed and assassination of leading trade unionists.

**Abolition of child labour** – extensive child labour in factories and the construction industry.

**Equality** – widespread discrimination against women, LGBT people and individuals with disabilities.

**Housing rights** – violent forced evictions to make way for investors. (Hundreds of thousands of Cambodians are currently at risk of eviction or have already been evicted).

**Indigenous Peoples’ rights** – forced evictions violate rights to possession of ancestral lands and to maintenance of traditions and customs.
CSR versus Human Rights

CSR:
• ‘Triple bottom-line’ – People, Planet, Profit
• Voluntary, management-driven and corporate-determined policies that are genuinely geared towards a positive social end, even if also intended to assist businesses’ profits.

Human rights:
• Should be a part of CSR
• Should be people-centred

Having a CSR policy
• DOES NOT guarantee compliance with human rights standards.
1. The Business Case

A human rights policy can increase profits:

- IMPROVED REPUTATION → HIGHER SALES
- INCREASED WORKER SATISFACTION → HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY
- SUPPLY-CHAIN SECURITY → STABILITY OF PRODUCTION
- EARLY-MOVER ADVANTAGE → VARIED COMMERCIAL BENEFITS
2. The Moral Case

- Human rights are universal; they should be guaranteed to all human beings.

- There is a heavy moral obligation on any societal actor to ensure that human rights are respected.

- Quite simply, it is the right thing to do.
3. The Legal Case

Businesses operating in Cambodia have an obligation to respect all Cambodian laws, including:

- **Penal Code (2008)** – a serious human rights violation may constitute a criminal offence.

In 2008 John Ruggie (the then UN special Representative to the Secretary-General on Business and Human Rights) introduced the ‘Three Pillars’ framework to govern the area of business and human rights.

1. The State has a **duty to protect** human rights
2. Businesses have a **responsibility to respect** human rights
3. If violations occur, there must be easy access to effective remedies
Project Overview – Project Objectives

**Overall:** increase respect for and adherence to human rights standards within businesses/commercial operations in Cambodia.

**Specific:**
- To increase awareness among the general public with regards to the human rights responsibilities of the business sector;
- To increase engagement with the business sector and the RGC with regards to the intersect between business and human rights; and
- To empower civil society and workers to advocate for their own rights.
Project Overview – Project’s Activities

Raise Awareness:

• Regular monitoring of relevant developments in the garment industry and in relation to land conflicts, and where appropriate issuing press releases/media comments in response
• Recording data on the ‘Business and Human Rights’ portal
• Broadcasting radio programs focused on the responsibility of businesses to respect human rights in relation to land rights and land concessions
Project Overview – Project’s Activities

Increase engagement:

• Arranging meetings with the Ministries of Labor and Commerce to discuss relevant issues and raise awareness of the State’s responsibility to protect human rights
• Arranging meetings with companies, factories and buyers that are engaging in positive measures to increase respect for human rights
• Writing letters to companies reportedly responsible for human rights violations and to international brands and buyers affiliated with garment factories
Empowerment:

• Training unions and related civil society groups on the GPs and their implementation
• Building capacity by producing and publishing a directory of relevant civil society actors
• Producing an audio version of the GPs in Khmer to distribute at training events, to civil society partners and to be read during radio talk shows
Target Groups

- NGOs
- Affected land communities
- RGC
- International brands and buyers
- CSOs and workers
- Factories and companies
Thank you for your attention!

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