
HUMAN RIGHTS AND BUSINESS

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Research guide

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Abstract:

The issue of human rights is central to good corporate citizenship and to a healthy bottom line. Many companies find strength in their human rights records; others suffer the consequences of ignoring this vital part of corporate life. Today, human rights are a key performance indicator for corporations all over the world. One of the great ironies of this period in history is that, just as technology remakes our world, the need to maintain the human dimension of our work, and a company's sense of its social responsibility, is growing at an equally rapid pace. Harmonizing economic growth with the protection of human rights is one of the great challenges we face today.

Keyword: - Human rights, Business, impact on Businesses, Economy, Business Ethics.

Introduction:

It is a challenge which, if met, can harness the great power of economic growth to the great principle of human dignity. At the 1999 Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum at Davos, United Nations Secretary- General Kofi Annan challenged world business leaders to initiate a Global Compact of shared values and principles to give a human face to the global market. In the twelve months since then, ensuring that the world economy truly responds to the needs of people has become even more imperative. The present report takes stock of the progress made by the business community in giving effect to the human rights principles of the Global Compact that businesses should: 1. support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights within their sphere of influence; and 2. make sure they are not complicit in human rights abuses. This, of course, is a cooperative effort between business, governments, the United Nations, business associations and non-governmental organizations as is brought out here. In this report, we first ask why human rights are important to business, what human rights are from the business perspective, where human rights standards and guidelines can be found and how to move from a statement of principle to real practice. Having set the stage, we highlight the expanding relationship between the United Nations and the business community working together for basic social values. Thirdly, we review the stage companies are at in taking on board human rights and in turning commitment to principle to verifiable operational activities on the ground. This requires close cooperation with civil society. Finally, the check list of nine steps that companies can take to integrate human rights into their principles, policies and activities is a useful guide for company action. Successfully facing the corporate human rights challenge will be crucial to business success nationally and



internationally in the years ahead. This report was developed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in partnership with the Business and Human Rights Program of Business for Social Responsibility, a San Francisco-based resource for companies working to address human rights and other topics related to corporate social responsibility. For more information on BSR, please visit www.bsr.org. My thanks to BSR and to the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights which made valuable comments on the draft of this paper I would also welcome the comments of readers on this report and my Office stands ready to cooperate in the future with all those wishing to promote respect for human rights through working with business.

Human Rights: On the Business Agenda :

As the New York Times noted in a December 8, 1999 editorial, "the ideal of universal human rights...is one of the most important political legacies of the century." At the dawn of the 21st century, one of the most significant changes in the human rights debate is the increased recognition of the link between business and human rights. In the first four decades after adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Cold War was the central political framework for viewing the world. Human rights were considered to be an issue that involved state action, not the actions of the private sector. In the ten years since the Cold War effectively ended, however, the world has begun to look very different indeed. Even before the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle, it had become clear that the debate concerning human rights now places business squarely in the middle. Why has this occurred? Several global trends have come together to place human rights higher on the business agenda:

The emergence of the global economy as the central geopolitical fact of our time, and the emergence of foreign trade as a polarizing political issue globally; · The information technology revolution that links the world as never before; · Increased consumer awareness and attention to issues like the labour practices of companies whose products they buy; · Privatization, which has elevated both the influence of business, as well as stakeholder assertions that companies should be publicly accountable; · Several high profile events in which businesses have been implicated in serious human rights violations; · Broad demands that companies operate in a more transparent manner, and; · The rapid growth of stakeholder groups, as, for example, the number of internationally- recognized NGOs has grown from 6,000 to 26,000 during the 1990s (The Economist, 11 December 1999).

Several businesses have responded to these trends by beginning to incorporate concern for human rights into their daily business operations. This development, parallel to the emergence of the environment as a business issue a generation ago, is demonstrated through several recent trends: The proliferation of corporate codes of conduct protecting the human rights and labor rights of workers employed by companies and their business partners; Inclusion of human rights, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, into companies' global business principles; Expanded attention paid by human rights organizations, consumers and the media to business' impact on human rights; Growing dialogue between companies and stakeholder groups concerned about human rights; Debate over the imposition of trade sanctions on nations broadly disregarding international human rights standards.



Human Rights Important to Business?

Businesses are increasingly focused on the impact they have on individuals, communities and the environment. It is clear that one of the central measures of a company's social responsibility is its respect for human rights. And while most companies recognize the moral imperative to operate consistent with human rights principles, recognition is growing that respect for human rights also can be a tool for improving business performance.

Some of the reasons concern for human rights is **important to business include:**

Compliance with both Local and International Laws:

Human rights principles are contained in national and international law. Ensuring that business operations are consistent with these legal principles helps companies avoid legal challenges to their global activities. In recent years in the United States and in other countries, courts have considered lawsuits alleging that multinational companies, sometimes through their business partners, have contributed to human rights violations in their global operations.

Satisfying Consumer Concerns:

Increased media attention to business' role in protecting human rights has led to increased consumer awareness of the treatment of workers producing goods for the global marketplace and demands for public accountability. Several companies have found themselves the targets of campaigns by human rights, labour rights, religious or consumer organizations highlighting allegations of human rights abuses. Establishing and enforcing a meaningful approach to human rights can help to avoid such campaigns, limit their impact on the company if they occur as well as protect the overall image of the company.

Promoting the Rule of Law:

Many of the principles enunciated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights involve the creation of a stable, rule-based society that is essential to the smooth functioning of business. Applying human rights principles thoroughly, consistently and impartially in a company's global operations can contribute to the development of legal systems in which contracts are enforced fairly, bribery and corruption are less prevalent and all business entities have equal access to legal process and equal protection under law.

Building Community Goodwill:

A multinational's presence can be viewed locally as positive or negative. Avoiding human rights violations will help maintain positive community relations and contribute to a more stable and productive business environment.

Supply Chain Management:

Many businesses' human rights policies are designed to promote their global business partners' compliance with human rights and labour rights standards. These policies can also



serve as tools to help companies select business partners which are well-managed and reliable and which operate ethically.

Enhancing Risk Management:

Predictability is essential to stable and productive business operations. The denial of basic human rights often leads to social or political disruption. This in turn can cause labour strife, restricted access to goods and services, or delays in the movement of finished products. And avoiding public controversies reduces the direct costs of resolving high-profile disputes. The recent WTO Ministerial demonstrated how broad concerns about the intersection of business and human rights, amongst other issues, hinders the further development of global trade agreements. In the United States, both nationally and at the state level, as well as in the European Union, trade sanctions have been established or proposed for a number of countries that are viewed as having widespread human rights violations.

Applying Corporate Values:

The denial of basic human rights in ways that hinder a company's ability to conduct its business consistent with its stated values can undermine the faith of employees and external stakeholders in company integrity.

Business Takes a Lead:

As companies have begun to address human rights issues, several initiatives have been undertaken that demonstrate the ways that companies can positively influence the extension of human rights around the world. As reflected in the Global Compact, there is much companies can do to address the growing societal expectation that companies have responsibility for the impact of their presence, and that acting in this way can help create a more stable climate for commercial activities. A number of innovative partnerships between companies, international and local human rights groups, labour unions, religious institutions, and charitable foundations have been undertaken in recent years. These include the Global Alliance for Workers, the global collective bargaining agreement between Statoil and the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Union, the Fair Labour Association, and the collaborative consultation that yielded the Global Sullivan Principles.

Research Methodology :

The present study deals with a detailed analysis of Human rights and Business. This study proposes the role of human rights and business in the aspect of business growth. the principal objective of the present study is to study the aspects of various human rights and business in contribution to the economic development of any sector or an individual. For the sampling of research, the multistage sampling method is applied. The samples for study were selected from various businessman in different sectors applying the concept of human rights in value to scale the business operations. The Primary data through questionnaires and interview method. Primary data was collected through questionnaires from 200 individuals out of which 120 were businessman from various sectors implementing the concept of human rights and in



their field. 50 personal interviews were taken for this study. The field survey was conducted recently in 2022.

Impact of the study (Conclusion):

The impact of this research conducted is an affirmative impact of human rights on the business. The study concludes that if businesses apply the various principles of human rights on a regular basis then it can affect their business in a positive aspect. The yields or returns to the business are higher.

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