

# COMPANIES NEED TO DO MORE TO ENSURE RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Human rights defenders (HRDs) are often subject to attacks and retaliation for their efforts to raise awareness of the adverse human rights impacts of business operations and harmful business conduct.



The UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights was established in 2011 by the UN Human Rights Council to promote, disseminate and implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. They began to develop an HRD Guidance in 2017, and launched it in 2021.



The Guidance contains twenty specific recommendations for States and businesses to ensure better protection and respect for HRDs, their freedoms and their vital work.

## PRACTICAL ACTIONS WE EXPECT FROM BUSINESSES



**Acknowledge** that respecting human rights means that their activities, actions and omissions do not lead to retaliation, violence or stigmatisation against those who defend them.

**Know & show** this commitment: have in place and communicate policies and procedures relating to human rights due diligence & impact assessments.



**Stop SLAPPs:** frivolous legal proceedings, including SLAPPs, not only create a heightened risk for HRDs, but poor strategy that undermines any other human rights commitments.

Use **leverage** in business relationships to develop & maintain respect for HRDs.



Conduct inclusive, meaningful **human rights due diligence** in which community leaders & HRDs play a key role in the processes.



**Engage** regularly and openly with affected stakeholders, civil society organisations, HRDs and trade unions, especially with those at higher risk, and be transparent about managing potential and actual impacts.



**Monitor risks** against HRDs to prevent negative impacts.



**Report transparently** on responses to concerns raised by HRDs and about human rights risks and reprisals faced by HRDs, while respecting the need to protect against retaliation.



Design and implement an **operational-level grievance mechanism** that can confidentially, anonymously, and accessibly provide remedy to HRDs and address risks.



**Respond to attacks against HRDs** with a clear protocol and one or more individuals whose responsibility it is to document, investigate and ensure such attacks do not reoccur.

