ICT Sector Guide on Implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
Background and acknowledgements

This Guide was written by Shift and the Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB).

In December 2011, IHRB and Shift were selected by the European Commission (Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry) to develop sector-specific guidance on the corporate responsibility to respect human rights, as set out in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The development of sector-specific human rights guidance is one of the deliverables of the European Commission's policy on corporate social responsibility, adopted in October 2011.

Further to a public consultation, and on the basis of objective criteria, the services of the European Commission decided that guidance would be developed for employment and recruitment agencies, information and communications technologies (“ICT”) companies, and oil and gas companies.

The development of this Guide involved extensive research and multi-stakeholder consultation. The process involved over 75 multi-stakeholder interviews per sector with individual experts, two periods of web-based public consultation, field-based research, and two multi-stakeholder roundtable discussions hosted by the European Commission. The European Commission, Shift and IHRB are very grateful to all the business, government, trade unions and civil society representatives, academics and other experts, whose input helped to shape the final document. (The full list of participants in the project can be found on the websites listed below.) In particular, they would like to thank:

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The above-mentioned people provided advice in a personal capacity. Their participation does not necessarily imply that they or the organisations they work for endorse the contents of this document.

Further information about the process by which this guidance was developed can be found on the websites of:

- The Institute for Human Rights and Business at [www.ihrb.org/project/eu-sector-guidance/index.html](http://www.ihrb.org/project/eu-sector-guidance/index.html) and

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FOREWORD

PART 1

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Objectives of the Guide 5
Scope of the Guide 6
Audience of the Guide 6
Structure of the Guide 6

PART 2

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACTS IN
THE ICT SECTOR 7

Human Rights Impacts in the ICT Sector 8
Understanding the ICT Sector in this Guide 8
Operating Contexts and the Relevance of the State Duty to Protect 9
Business Relationships 10
Understanding Potential Negative Impacts 11
Analytical Framework for Assessing Potential Impacts of Company Activities on Stakeholder Groups 12

PART 3

PUTTING RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS INTO PRACTICE 14

Understanding Human Rights Due Diligence 16
How does the Responsibility to Respect Apply to Smaller Companies? 16

I Developing a Policy Commitment and Embedding Respect for Human Rights 17

What do the UN Guiding Principles Expect? 17
Why is this Important? 17
What are the Steps Involved? 17
A. Defining the Content of a Policy Commitment 18
B. Developing the Policy Commitment 19
C. Communicating the Policy Commitment 21
D. Aligning Internally with the Policy Commitment 22
E. Applying the Commitment to Business Relationships 24
Where to Start 25
Questions to Ask 26

II Assessing Human Rights Impacts 27

What do the UN Guiding Principles Expect? 27
Why is this Important? 27
What are the Steps Involved? 27
A. Building a Systematic Approach to Assessment 28
B. Understanding your Operating Context 30
C. Reviewing Business Relationships 32
D. Drawing on Expertise 36
E. Consulting Affected Stakeholders 37
Where to Start 40
Questions to Ask 41
III Integrating and Acting  
What do the UN Guiding Principles Expect?  42
Why is this Important?  42
What are the Steps Involved?  42
A. Building a Systematic Approach to Integrating and Acting  43
B. Prioritising Impacts for Action  46
C. Identifying Options to Prevent or Mitigate Potential Impacts  47
D. Creating and Using Leverage in Business Relationships  50
E. Acting in High-Risk Contexts  53
Where to Start  55
Questions to Ask  56

IV Tracking Performance  
What do the UN Guiding Principles Expect?  57
Why is this Important?  57
What are the Steps Involved?  57
A. Building a Systematic Approach to Tracking  58
B. Developing Indicators  60
C. Incorporating Stakeholder Perspectives  61
D. Tracking through Business Relationships  62
Where to Start  64
Questions to Ask  64

V Communicating Performance  
What do the UN Guiding Principles Expect?  65
Why is this Important?  65
What are the Steps Involved?  65
A. Building a Systematic Approach to Communicating  66
B. Deciding Who Communicates What, to Whom and How  67
C. Considering and Improving Formal Reporting  69
Where to Start  71
Questions to Ask  72

VI Remediation and Operational-Level Grievance Mechanisms  
What do the UN Guiding Principles Expect?  73
Why is this Important?  73
What are the Steps Involved?  73
A. Building a Systematic Approach to Remediation  74
B. Mapping and Working with External Remediation Processes  76
C. Designing Effective Operational-Level Grievance Mechanisms  78
Where to Start  82
Questions to Ask  82

ANNEX 1: KEY RESOURCES  84
ANNEX 2: KEY CONCEPTS  94
FOREWORD

The European Union is a strong believer in globalisation’s potential for positive change. By harnessing the creative power of people and enterprises across the world, globalisation can improve living conditions for all. The ultimate purpose of our economy is to contribute to human development.

We also believe that globalisation needs to take place within a system of international norms in order to ensure its contribution to social and economic development, in full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Indeed, we see these two goals as mutually reinforcing.

The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights are an important new step in the development of international norms that will help to realise the full potential of globalisation. Their implementation is integral to the European Union’s human rights strategy and to the European Commission’s policy on corporate social responsibility. Similarly, European Union Member States have committed to develop their own national plans for implementing the UN Guiding Principles.

We are pleased to present this practical guide for information and communication technologies (“ICT”) companies on how to ensure respect for human rights. The guide, which is not a legally binding document, translates the expectations of the UN Guiding Principles into the particular context of the ICT sector. It is the fruit of intensive consultations with business people, trade union representatives, representatives of human rights organisations and other experts. We are very grateful to them all.

The European Union offers this guidance as a contribution towards global efforts to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. We welcome the prospect of further engagement with governments, enterprises, civil society, and other actors from all regions of the world. And we appreciate the need for close dialogue and partnership with international organisations, including the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Not so long ago environmental management was something that concerned only a small number of companies. For many companies it has today become a natural part of doing business, considered vital for long-term success. We have a similar vision for the future of business and human rights: where respecting human rights is understood as being an intrinsic part of business excellence.

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