



The UN Business and Human Security Initiative

This research and advisory programme was set up in 2018 as a collaboration between LSE IDEAS, the London School of Economics strategy think-tank, the United Nations and research and practice networks in the UK, Spain, the Netherlands, France and Colombia.

Our focus is on understanding and applying people-centred and holistic approaches to business-society challenges such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the COVID pandemic, the digital transformation and climate change. We have a multi-disciplinary perspective and can draw on expertise across LSE departments in areas such as behavioural science, philanthropy, economics, systemic risk and human rights.

There are two strands to our current work:

1. Human Security Business Partnerships

The Human Security Business Partnership Framework, developed by the LSE with researchers in France, Spain, the Netherlands and Colombia, and the United Nations, is a practical, solution-focused guidance that aims to address the multiple challenges that confront business and communities interactions in local environments with complex development needs.

Companies and investors may be implicated in fragile settings, characterised by the presence of high risks to both business and vulnerable populations, either directly or through supply and value chains. This guidance model aims to manage the demands (regulatory, reporting and reputational) of working in these settings, and leverage opportunities to achieve sustainable, positive social impacts.

The Framework consists of a set of principles, processes and tools that structure long-term collaborations or 'partnerships' between business and local stakeholders. Human security is a term which encompasses what every individual and their community needs to lead a tolerable life, with decent livelihoods, food security, access to healthcare, a clean environment and freedom from fear.

Using the ideas and methodology of human security – such as bottom- up, locally-driven and inclusive, and a partnering approach - Human Security Business Partnerships are designed to complement existing strategies to realise agendas such as the SDGs, the Just Transition and achieve ESG goals. They provide a process for addressing the most pressing human security needs at local level. Through these partnerships, business can transform its engagement with communities affected by its operations, have a better understanding of local conditions, risks, capacities and

opportunities, achieve collective solutions to social and business challenges, and generate positive outcomes rather than bargaining over rights and grievances.

Each context in which companies operate is different. The HSBP Framework is not about suggesting a single approach, or that 'one size fits all' in engaging with local communities and managing social impacts. It offers guidance for working with diverse actors: how to overcome disparate perspectives and interests, contribute to improving social inclusion and cohesion, and build long-term trust. Through building stronger relationships on the ground – at key points in the supply and value chain - companies can use this approach to identify material risks in a given location, obtain hard to access granular local data and measure and report on social impacts as they unfold.

Human Security Business Partnerships seek to fill a gap that exists in developing holistic and integrated solutions in complex settings, connecting environmental, social and governance issues, and ensure that global ambitions on issues such as responsibility and resilience are translated into local action.

In the last three years the Framework has been applied in Colombia to expand supply chains in previously hard to reach areas of the country, and help companies contribute to the peace process; it is being used to add value to corporate social investment programmes in Mexico and the human security, people-centred approach has been adopted by investor coalitions such as Force for Good as well as the G20.

2. The Human Impact Pathway

In 2023 we began developing a set of resources and tools for companies and investors to help them integrate a people-centred approach into ESG and sustainability strategies. The *Human Impact Pathway* adds a robust, research-informed element to efforts to design, assess, measure and report on social impacts at ground level. As reporting regulations and sustainability requirements increase, active management of the local context will be an important part of corporate due diligence. Effective and innovative involvement with stakeholders is critical to companies who want to go beyond basic compliance. New relationships of trust and mutual benefit with communities, including marginalised groups, local governments and civil society are needed to implement and demonstrate positive social impacts and how the private sector can be an agent for change.

The HIP will help answer questions like how to engage proactively as an operating company, an ESG investor or a downstream company at the end of an extended supply chain; what are material factors in the context of your business; what does good practice look like in terms of the S in ESG; how can business develop ESG indicators and KPIs that incorporate what happens on the ground in complex and sometimes remote locations; what kind of data do companies need to quantify and interpret social impacts; how can you use local evidence to improve internal and external communications?

We are keen to work with companies and investors in developing these resources that meet growing investor, customer and employee expectations, and help bring clarity and credibility to business efforts. We also talk to policy-makers about how the views and experience of business can build better legislation and regulatory standards.

For more information and to find out how your company can be part of pilot projects to introduce human security partnerships or capture the lessons of your corporate experience to develop the Human Impact Pathway please go to <https://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/projects/united-nations-at-lse/Research-Outputs>

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