



On the Horizon

A practical bulletin on what is ahead in the field of business & human rights

Issue 8 - Monday 8 Dec 2008

This bulletin is prepared by the [Business & Human Rights Resource Centre](#) for our International Advisory Network, Academic Partners, and select others working in this field. It presents contributions from a number of experts & organizations. It is designed to keep all of us informed of future initiatives.

*If you would like to contribute to our next bulletin planned for early February 2009, please send your announcement about an event, publication or initiative **taking place after 6 February** to Mauricio Lazala: lazala@business-humanrights.org. Please keep the contribution under 200 words. The deadline for contributions is Wednesday 28 January.*

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1. Forthcoming Amnesty Intl. paper on non-judicial mechanisms

As part of [Amnesty International](#)'s ongoing work on access to justice, the organisation will publish an issue paper that looks at the potential contribution of "non judicial" mechanisms (NJMs) to ensuring access to justice in cases where companies are involved in human rights violations.

NJMs have been established by companies, by multi-stakeholder initiatives, and incorporated within State mechanisms such as national human rights institutions. This Amnesty International paper argues that whether NJMs are publicly or privately operated, they must still be evaluated against the background of overriding state obligations to regulate businesses (and their impacts) effectively, which includes the obligation to ensure that effective remedies are available when rights are violated. This paper therefore pays particular attention to the issue of whether existing NJMs can really be regarded as "remedial" mechanisms, and the basic requirements of an effective NJM. The paper will be published early in 2009.

→ Contributed by *Danny Vannucchi, Economic Relations Team, Amnesty Intl.* (danny.vannucchi@amnesty.org)

2. India: Ethical Brands Group meeting; ILO introducing "Dalit Human Rights Check"

The Ethical Brands Group in India will convene their quarterly meeting in Bangalore on 8 December 2008. All major brands from US, Europe and some Hong Kong based companies are part of this group, as well as a number of consultancy groups specialised in compliance. Guest speakers from the UN system, NGOs, bilateral partners and professionals are regularly invited.

In the 8 December session, the ILO will introduce the "Dalit Human Rights Check" to the group. This tool has been developed by Danish Institute for Human Rights and the IDSN (International Dalit Solidarity Network) with inputs from many interested in the subject, including the ILO.

The tool is specifically targeting private sector companies allowing their human resources officers to promote increased quality participation of dalits and offers ways to review the current status of dalits in their workforce.

→ Contributed by *Coen Kompier, ILO New Delhi* (ckompier@ilo.org)

3. India: Convention on Right to Education and the Abolition of Child Labour, 11-12 Dec

The National Commission on the Protection of Childs Rights in collaboration with the ILO and UNICEF is organizing a National Convention on the Right to Education and the Abolition of Child Labour – Towards Freedom and Dignity of All Children. The Convention is being held on 11 and 12 December 2008 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

This Convention presents the opportunity for joint dialogue between government, decision makers, political leaders, NGOs, corporate, employers organizations, trade unions, panchayat members, parents and children to call for the urgent and necessary policy and practice changes required to protect all children from economic exploitation and guarantee them their right to education as a non negotiable.

The ILO and Save the Children are organising the working group on "Role of Corporate Sector and the Media" on 12 December. Speakers from GAP, IKEA, IBN, CNN, and Prof. Shankar Venkateswaran will speak about their initiatives and effectiveness of these interventions. A trade union representative will also participate in the panel. Major companies, Indian and international, have all been invited to participate in the workshop with ample space to recount their experiences varying from interventions on home-based work to the use of "clean cotton".

→ Contributed by *Coen Kompier, ILO New Delhi* (ckompier@ilo.org)

4. Amnesty Intl. Dutch Section launches new e-learning training tool for business

On 10 December Amnesty International Dutch Section will launch an e-learning human rights training tool for companies, "Pure Business". After completing the three stages of the training tool, business people will be able:

- to articulate what human rights are and why they matter for their business;
- to articulate the rights that matter for their specific company and be better equipped to formulate the most appropriate policies and practices;
- to explain to employees and colleague what the company stands for in relation to human rights and put in words to the board how it should be equipped for those aims.

The training tool is designed to support staff with or without a background in human rights.

To access the tool visit www.purebusiness.nl

→ Contributed by Hilke Molenaar, Amnesty Intl. Netherlands (h.molenaar@amnesty.nl)

5. Public Interest Law Institute invites cases and projects seeking pro bono legal assistance

Public Interest Law Institute is currently preparing its next distribution list of potential pro bono cases or projects. If your organization is seeking legal assistance and you are interested in PILI's Global Pro Bono Clearinghouse program, please contact us.

The Public Interest Law Institute (PILI) is a leading advocate for institutionalizing pro bono practice (volunteer legal assistance) in Europe and beyond. By promoting and providing pro bono legal assistance for NGOs, PILI helps increase access to legal resources for more disadvantaged groups.

PILI has successfully created a number of pro bono clearinghouses (in Hungary, Russia, and China) that match up lawyers ready to volunteer their services for the public good. The [Global Pro Bono Clearinghouse](#), created in 2006, partners law firms in one country with NGOs in another. Lists of available matters (or potential pro bono cases or projects), which NGOs submit on an ongoing basis to PILI, are distributed monthly to lawyers and law firms.

→ Contributed by Tamas Barabas (tbarabas@pili.org)

6. Danish Institute to launch Human Rights Compliance Assessment 2.0; Balkan Quick Check

Human Rights Compliance Assessment (HRCA) 2.0

The HRCA is an online human rights compliance assessment tool for companies, developed by the Danish Institute for Human Rights and operational since 2005. After four years of experience in a wide range of companies, DIHR has gathered user feedback and is in the final stages of reprogramming the HRCA 2.0 adds more features and respond to further company needs. The HRCA 2.0 will launch in early 2009. New features include:

- New interface
- Tailoring to company operations
- Country risk matching
- Assessments and final reports can be accessed offline and exported to company networks (mid-2009)

→ For more information please contact Rita Roca at (rro@humanrights.dk)

Balkan HRCA Quick Check

As part of the Human Rights & Business Project's ongoing capacity building activities, the Balkan-specific Human Rights Compliance Assessment Quick Check will be launched in early 2009.

The tool, based on the HRCA Quick Check assessment tool for companies, identifies the main CSR and human rights issues for businesses operating in the Western Balkans. The tool has been developed with the cooperation of representatives from the Human Rights and Business Project and the Balkan Human Rights Network.

→ For more information please contact Marie Busck at (mab@humanrights.dk)

7. Dam-building in the Himalayas: Intl. Rivers to publish report on human rights impacts

On 8 December, [International Rivers](#) will publish a report which analyses the vast social and environmental impacts and the significant human rights, safety and climate-related risks of dam building in the Himalayas. Based on the report, civil society groups in the region will discuss a coordinated response to this new challenge.

The new report, "Damming the Himalayas", will be available at www.internationalrivers.org/himalaya-report from 8 December.

As a region of extraordinary geographic, ecological, social, and cultural diversity, the Himalayas are a true global heritage. They are also the source of some of Asia's longest rivers, on which millions of people depend for their livelihoods. Hydropower developers are now planning to turn the Himalayas into the region with the world's highest concentration of large dams.

When fertile lands are submerged for power generation, rivers diverted into tunnels and thousands of construction workers dispatched to remote valleys, the region's indigenous peoples are threatened in their very existence. Local communities and social movements are fighting many dam projects in the Himalayan Arc, and governments have militarised hotspots of dam building. The ensuing conflicts have triggered serious repression and human rights violations. Several people were for example killed in protests against India's Khuga Dam.

→ Contributed by Peter Bosshard, *International Rivers* (peter@internationalrivers.org)

8. Fairfood Intl. proposes transparency law in Netherlands on human rights in production chains

Transparency law: power to the consumer! To paraphrase one of the world's biggest businesses, the holidays are coming. And with them comes – apart from feelings of compassion and solidarity – consumer frenzy. But how compatible are the two? Given the ongoing human rights abuses in the supply chains of many products found on the European market, how can you go Christmas shopping without a nagging conscience?

Sadly, the answer is that you cannot really. One way would be to limit your shopping to certified goods. But that is hardly feasible. Nor does every certification promise the same ethics. The problem is that consumers simply lack the relevant information to make a responsible choice. Even worse, producing companies themselves often don't have a clear picture of their supply chain. Still, governments everywhere tend to leave CSR up to the market.

In the Netherlands we are drafting a transparency law proposal. This proposal would grant the consumer the right to know to what extent companies can guarantee the absence of certain human rights violations in their production chains. The proposal will be sent to the State Council mid-December, after whose advice it will be submitted to parliament. Next year, Fairfood International will establish a lobby coalition in Brussels aiming to introduce a similar proposal on the EU level. For any further information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

→ Contributed by Philip Ebels, *Fairfood International* (philip.ebels@fairfood.org)

9. Conference on the right to water hosted by Amnesty Intl. (Toronto, 28 Feb)

On 28 February 2009, the Amnesty Intl. Toronto Business & Human Rights group will be hosting a conference on the right to water. The conference will include a keynote address from Maude Barlow (UN Senior Water Adviser, co-founder of Blue Water Project, Chair of the Council of Canadians) as well as specialised break-out sessions dealing with the right to water from various perspectives. Join us for a day of education, inspiration and action.

→ For more information and/or to register, email (business@aito.ca); contributed by Fiona Koza, *Amnesty International Canada* (fkzoza@amnesty.ca)

10. Forthcoming book by Robert Senser on human rights and globalization

Justice at Work: Globalization and the Human Rights of Workers, scheduled for publication in January, explores how and why the prevailing paradigm for the global economy needs to change.

The author, Robert A. Senser, a veteran human rights advocate, has long focused on that controversial topic in articles for a variety of publications, including *America*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Dissent*, *Far Eastern Economic Review* and *Foreign Affairs*. With selections from that material, *Justice at Work* tracks the emergence of three parallel movements – against sweatshops, for corporate social responsibility, and for fair trade – assesses their achievements (and shortcomings), and then analyses the latest human rights developments, particularly the initiative to embed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into the culture of multinational corporations.

In making a principled case for such causes, Senser draws on his own experience as a Labor Attaché in the US Foreign Service on four continents for 21 years and as a staff member of the AFL-CIO Asian-American Institute and a volunteer in various human rights activities for more than two decades.

→ Contributed by Robert Senser, blog at <http://humanrightsforworkers.blogspot.com>

11. CSRTube invites NGOs, researchers, companies & others to upload videos

CSRTube is the first global media platform dedicated to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) issues. CSRTube is an initiative of the Dutch [MVO Platform](#) (CSR Platform) and [lokaalmondiaal](#).

The aim of CSRTube is to increase the impact of the work of civil society organizations, research institutions, governments, and companies dealing with CSR issues. CSRTube intends to contribute to the debate around CSR, and to inform people about its developments. Citizens and civil society organizations from all over the world are invited to upload and share their video material on CSRTube. Get inspired by initiatives that promote CSR. Learn to make videos and be able to contribute with your CSR initiatives. Tell your story to a wider audience, share it, and contribute to changing the world. There is a US\$1000 prize for the best CSR film uploaded to CSRTube. See it, film it, share it. www.csrtube.net.

→ Contributed by Stefan Verwer (stefan@lokaalmondiaal.net)

12. Agadir, Morocco: Intl. conference on corporate social responsibility, 26-28 Feb 2009

An international conference on corporate social responsibility will take place in Agadir, Morocco from 26-28 February 2009. It is organized jointly by the Department of Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development of UQAM (University of Quebec, Montreal) and partner organizations. It will gather researchers from different countries in Africa, the Middle East, Americas & Europe.

These experts are going to present their research results on practices used by CSR rating agencies and on the link between CSR and financial performance. Moreover, they will present different case studies on CSR in emerging markets and insist on the need for companies operating in these countries to be socially and environmentally responsible.

→ For more information, please contact agadir2009@uqam.ca or visit the conference website at www.isiam.ma/RSE/index.htm

13. Chile: UN Global Compact participants to improve inclusion of people with disabilities

Chilean companies participating in the UN Global Compact have made inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace a priority for 2009.

Some companies are already doing this. They have put in place selection procedures, agreements with foundations and training programs for beneficiaries and workers to better understand inclusion and the impacts of pilot programmes in this area. Discrimination against workers for reasons including race, gender, health or disability is an abuse of human rights.

In Chile, legislation regarding people with disabilities does not provide any incentive for companies to include people with disabilities, hence action in this area relies on goodwill.

The Global Compact's mission and objective is to raise awareness in this regard. Our planned activities on inclusion of people with disabilities aim to provide a good example that will motivate others to take action.

→ Contribuido por Margarita Ducci, Secretaria Ejecutiva, Pacto Global Chile (mducci@unab.cl)

14. Corporate Watchdog Radio broadcasts interviews with Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, Human Rights Watch commentaries

On 10 December 2008, [Corporate Watchdog Radio](#) will celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by interviewing Annabel Short of the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre on the significance of the anniversary for the 230 corporations that have human rights policies (many acknowledging the UDHR) – and the majority of companies that *don't*. The interview will also touch on the work Annabel is doing with [Realizing Rights](#) to encourage companies to respect human rights in their practices and policies. CWR co-hosts Bill Baue and Francesca Rheannon will also speak with Greg Tzeuschler Regaignon about the Resource Centre's new [Corporate Legal Accountability Portal](#).

Finally, the show marks the first in CWR's new partnership with [Human Rights Watch](#) to provide commentaries from HRW director of business and human rights Arvind Ganesan and others. Other commentary partners

include [Business Ethics Network](#) and thought leaders such as Hazel Henderson, who is a member of the Advisory Board of *Sea Change*, the new name for *Corporate Watchdog Radio*.

The re-launch as *Sea Change* is happening in January 2009 to shift toward covering positive sustainability solutions. The weekly half-hour show will continue airing on 20 stations nationally and podcast globally from www.CChange.net, and is actively pursuing further expansion onto more stations.

→ Contributed by Bill Baue (bbaue@verizon.net)

15. Business & Human Rights Resource Centre to appoint Francophone Africa Researcher

[Business & Human Rights Resource Centre](#) will shortly be announcing the appointment of a Francophone Africa Researcher, based in Dakar, Senegal. Our regional researchers draw attention to the human rights impacts of companies in their region; highlight under-reported issues and cases; seek responses from companies when concerns are raised by civil society, and build contacts with NGOs, companies, journalists and government representatives. We will announce the appointment in a forthcoming edition of our [Weekly Update](#).

Our work in Africa, including this position, is supported by a grant from the Open Society Institute.

→ Contributed by Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (contact@business-humanrights.org)

16. Français : Agadir, Maroc : Colloque international sur la responsabilité sociale des entreprises

Un colloque international portant sur la responsabilité sociale des entreprises se tiendra du 26 au 28 février 2009 à Agadir, au Maroc. Co-organisé par la Chaire de Responsabilité Sociale et de Développement Durable de l'UQAM (Université du Québec à Montréal), l'ISIAM (Institut Supérieur d'Informatique Appliquée et de Management d'Agadir), RIODD (Réseau International de recherche sur les Organisations et le Développement Durable), CEREGMIA (Centre d'Etudes et de Recherche en Economie, Gestion, Modélisation et informatique Appliquée), cet événement regroupera des chercheurs de renom de différents pays : Afrique, Moyen-Orient, Amérique et Europe.

Ces experts présenteront les résultats de leurs recherches portant sur les pratiques utilisées par les agences de notations de la RSE ainsi que sur la relation entre la RSE et la performance financière. Aussi, ils présenteront différentes études de cas sur le sujet dans les pays émergents et mettront l'accent sur la nécessité pour les entreprises des pays émergents d'être socialement et environnementalement responsables.

→ Pour tout renseignement, veuillez contacter agadir2009@uqam.ca ou visiter le site web: www.isiam.ma/RSE/index.htm

17. Español: Plan de las empresas chilenas adheridas al Pacto Global: inclusión de discapacitados

Las empresas adheridas al Pacto Global en Chile han definido entre sus prioridades para el próximo año unar esfuerzos para poner en marcha un plan de inclusión a los discapacitados.

Hay varias empresas que ya lo están haciendo y han puesto en práctica procesos de selección, convenios con fundaciones, programas de capacitación para los beneficiados y para los trabajadores, de modo de entender la inclusión y los alcances de planes piloto en esta área. La discriminación a empleados por ciertas razones, tales como raza, género, estado de salud o discapacidad, atenta contra el principio de los derechos humanos.

En Chile, la legislación respecto a los discapacitados aún no contempla ningún aliciente para la empresa, lo que pudiera favorecer la inserción de personas con discapacidad. Esto hace que ella dependa exclusivamente de la buena voluntad.

Como Pacto Global nuestra misión y nuestro objetivo es crear una mayor conciencia en este sentido, para lo cual, este trabajo que nos hemos propuesto, en torno a la inclusión de discapacitados, es un buen ejemplo para motivar a otros a sumarse en esta cruzada.

→ Contribuido por Margarita Ducci, Secretaria Ejecutiva, Pacto Global Chile (mducci@unab.cl)

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