



DIGITAL AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The [Business and Human Rights Navigator](#) is a free online resource that guides companies around the world to better understand and address human rights impacts in their operations and supply chains.

The dilemma for business

The rapid acceleration of AI and emerging technologies presents a strategic dilemma for business. Companies must innovate and adopt advanced technologies to remain competitive, while ensuring these tools do not harm human rights.

Under the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights \(UNGPs\)](#), all companies have a responsibility to respect human rights across their operations and business relationships. This includes conducting human rights due diligence (HRDD) consistent with [OECD guidance](#) to address risks to workers, suppliers, communities and users – particularly when designing, deploying or adopting digital technologies.

Risks and opportunities from emerging technologies for human rights

	Potential harms (risks)	Potential benefits (opportunities)
Equity & Inclusion	Algorithmic bias and discriminatory impacts on marginalised groups	AI-driven analysis to detect and remove systemic bias in recruitment or lending
Labour Rights	Job displacement, increased precarity and invasive workplace surveillance	AI-tools and training to support human rights risk identification and grievance mechanisms
Privacy & Expression	Data exploitation, mass surveillance and the erosion of anonymous expression	Enhanced secure communications tools and increased accessibility for diverse voices
Environmental Rights	High water and energy consumption of large-scale data centres	AI-optimised resource management and accelerated development of green technologies

BUSINESS BENEFITS FROM HRDD IN TECHNOLOGY VALUE CHAINS



Regulatory compliance

The EU's Artificial Intelligence Act, Digital Services Act and General Data Protection Regulation impose standards and penalties, often applying beyond the EU. Many other countries and regions either have their own AI and digital laws in place or are developing them.



Resilience and governance

Integrating a human rights lens into technology design, procurement and deployment reduces operational blind spots and mitigates supply chain and business model risks.



Trust and competitiveness

Investors, customers and regulators increasingly expect responsible AI. Companies that embed transparency, ethical safeguards and rights holders protections build trust, protect brand value and strengthen long-term market position.

What responsibilities do companies have?

All companies involved in the technology value chain have a responsibility to address human rights harms. This includes businesses that develop tech such as AI providers, but also deployers, users, supply chain actors and distributors.

Best practice for businesses is to carry out Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) across the value chain, supported by strong governance and clear accountability.

If your company is not ready yet, there are still practical steps you can take. You can start by understanding how your technology is used in the real world by engaging with customers, strengthening accountability for human rights within your organisation and identifying risks across your value chain.

Companies designing or producing technology should embed human rights considerations into their products and business models, integrating safeguards to prevent harm.

Companies procuring technology should address potential human rights risks in how the tech was developed.

Companies distributing technology should assess how it may affect end-users and take steps to reduce risks to their rights.

Practical resources include those from [UN B-Tech](#), [UN Working Group on Human Rights](#) and [OECD](#) (ch.9)



Case Study: Rights-based product development from a global consumer goods business

A global consumer goods company integrates child rights considerations at the early stages of digital product design. Dedicated cross-functional teams work across legal, compliance and product functions to embed safety and rights-based standards from concept to deployment.

The business complements governance with direct user engagement and digital literacy initiatives, helping children and caregivers to navigate online environments safely, while reinforcing responsible technology use across its operations.



Case Study: Transparent AI governance by a large multinational technology company

A software and technology company anchors its core values in human rights, integrating them into the design, development and release of AI systems.

Human Rights Due Diligence informs its product lifecycle decisions, while its annual responsible AI transparency reports disclose risk management processes, product safeguards and oversight of sensitive use cases. This approach strengthens accountability and contributes to safer product launches, reduced misuse incidents and increased consumer confidence, demonstrating leadership in responsible innovation.

Integrating human rights due diligence into technology use and deployment

As digital technologies and AI rapidly evolve, companies must ensure their Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) keeps pace. For more information about HRDD, see the [BHR Navigator](#).

1. Develop a policy commitment

Companies should create a human rights policy that addresses both current and potential risks linked to their use of technology

2. Assess actual and potential impacts

Businesses should identify technology-specific risks and prioritize them based on severity and likelihood

3. Take action to address impacts

Review contracts with technology suppliers to ensure they include clear human rights standards and expectations

4. Track performance

Assess the effectiveness of your due diligence through methods such as worker surveys, supplier audits or customer engagements

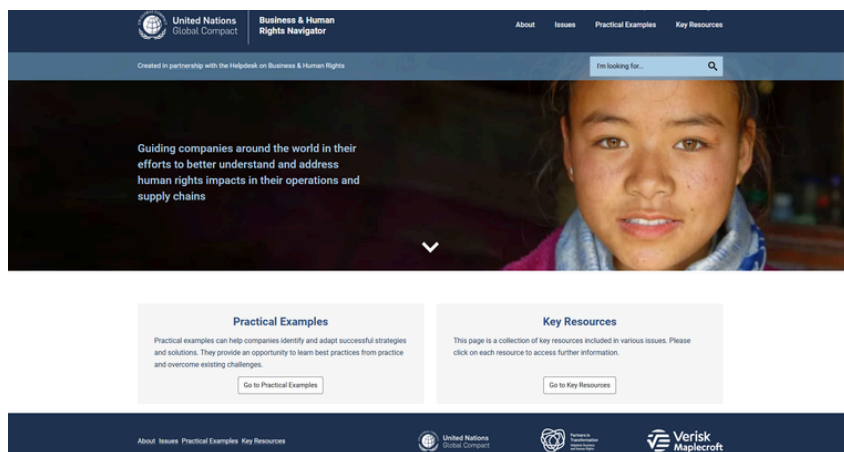
5. Communicate performance

Demonstrate credibility and build trust with stakeholders through improved transparency on human rights, such as public reports and policies

6. Remedy and grievance mechanisms

Establish accessible and trusted channels for raising concerns alongside clear processes to provide remedy. Account for technology-specific challenges, including automated and algorithmic decision-making

HOW THE BHR NAVIGATOR CAN HELP



The [BHR Navigator](#) supports companies to identify, prevent and address human rights risks across operations and value chains. Aligned with the UN Global Compact Ten Principles and the UNGPs, it provides practical guidance to help companies better understand the human rights issues they may encounter and integrate human rights due diligence to manage risks.