

Educating Future Leaders

Integrating Human Rights into Business Education



ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit has been developed by the Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights (GCBHR) and the NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights (NYU Stern CBHR), with the support of the Global Business School Network (GBSN). Professors Dorothee Baumann-Pauly (Director GCBHR), Michael Posner (Director NYU Stern CBHR), and Dan LeClair (CEO of GBSN) are the co-authors. Together, they are leading the Global Business School Network for Business and Human Rights Impact Community (GBSN for BHR). More information about the network can be found in this toolkit and under the following weblink: <https://gsbn.org/gbsn-for-bhr/>.

The toolkit is intended to help educators at business schools who wish to integrate human rights into their research and teaching. It draws on the experience of representatives from business schools around the world, both professors and administrators. It includes information and resources that illustrate the increasing relevance of human rights in a business school context. It also refers to resources that can be helpful to those who wish to become involved. Finally, it provides practical resources to help business educators institutionalize Business and Human Rights (BHR) materials in their schools' curricula.

We thank the GCBHR team Clara Berrada, Pascale Chavaz and Dr. Berit Knaak for their conceptual contributions as well as Julianna LaBelle from GBSN, Victoria Anderson and Iris Lee of NYU Stern CBHR. We are grateful to the many individuals in the GBSN for BHR network who provided input from their institutional context to the development of this toolkit.

Published in July 2025

How to cite: Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights, & NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights. (2025). *Educating future leaders: Integrating human rights into business education*.

The digital version of this toolkit includes hyperlinks to all referenced entities and resources.

Educating Future Leaders

Integrating Human Rights into Business Education



GBSN for BHR annual meeting, 2019

Page 5

INTRODUCTION

Making the case for human rights in business education

— 1 —

Page 7

From commitment to implementation – Our theory of change

Adopting a new perspective on management education
Integrating human rights into the curriculum

— 2 —

Page 10

GBSN for BHR – A purpose-driven network for change

Joining the network
Engaging in the network
GBSN for BHR Ambassadors from corporate practice

— 3 —

Page 15

BHR resources for research and teaching

Publishing BHR research
BHR Young Researchers Summit for emerging scholars
BHR teaching resources

— 4 —

Page 23

Institutional models for integrating human rights

Testimonies from business schools

— INTRODUCTION —

Making the case for human rights in business education

As the global economy expands, multinational companies face mounting human rights challenges across their labor supply chains and the application of new technologies. This evolving landscape generates increased public scrutiny and demands for greater government regulation, as investors and consumers expect higher standards of corporate responsibility. The challenge intensifies because global businesses routinely operate where local governments are unwilling or unable to protect their own people, creating significant governance gaps and elevated risks.

Historically, many companies asserted their only obligation was following local law, often outsourcing human rights protection to suppliers and business partners without providing necessary resources. As this landscape shifts, the responsibility extends beyond multinational companies in high-income countries to encompass their suppliers and partners – particularly fast-growing companies in developing nations across sectors like agribusiness, energy, finance, technology, and mining. In this rapidly evolving environment, business students need greater opportunities to grapple with the tough choices multinational corporations face as they seek to balance commercial imperatives with their responsibilities to respect human rights.

Even small and medium-sized enterprises can no longer escape global expectations. Evolving regulations being introduced by the European Union (EU) and other governments add pressures to companies at every level to demonstrate alignment with human rights standards. These challenges prove especially complex in environments with weak regulatory enforcement, common informal labor, and pressing unemployment and poverty concerns. Conflicting pressures emerge in sectors critical to global sustainability and security where critical minerals like cobalt, lithium, and rare earth elements are vital for green and digital transitions yet fraught with human rights issues that companies, investors, and governments can no longer ignore.

The manifestation of these issues varies dramatically across business sectors, countries, and regions. Companies with global manufacturing or agricultural supply chains grapple with everything from worker safety to child labor. Mining companies operate in conflict zones facing constant security challenges and exploitation concerns. Social media and AI platforms test current governance models as they often exacerbate political divisions and hate speech. All operate in an increasingly transparent world where new technologies amplify public attention, putting even the largest companies' brand reputations at risk.

As these human rights challenges generate increased interest among students, business schools that incorporate human rights into their curricula have the potential to enhance their public reputations, improve recruitment prospects, strengthen ratings, and generate new funding sources. More fundamentally, it's simply the right approach given the importance of these issues to society. As traditional business education faces rising costs and declining applications, schools featuring cutting-edge global issues like human rights in their teaching and research will position themselves as leaders in 21st century business education.

Building on this recognition, the Center for Business and Human Rights at New York University's Stern School of Business (NYU Stern CBHR) and the Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights at the University of Geneva's School of Economics and Management (GCBHR) have been building a network of educators to improve human rights education in business schools since 2017. Their 2021 partnership with the Global Business School Network (GBSN) – whose mission is empowering business schools to address society's development needs – is particularly strategic.

Many GBSN schools located in the Global South witness human rights issues in global supply chains unfolding in real time, creating valuable collaboration opportunities with European and North American counterparts. GBSN is also well placed to support and connect schools engaging in efforts to integrate human rights into management education. Their alliance was formalized in 2022 as the Global Business School Network for Business and Human Rights Impact Community (GBSN for BHR), under the GBSN umbrella, which also serves as the PRME (Principles for Responsible Management Education) Working Group on Business and Human Rights.

"I hope that these values and principles will be learned, discussed, and debated in business school lecture halls around the world. [...] Because human rights are not an abstract idea or ideology. They are concrete, and they are universal. [...] When respected fully, they can unleash innovation and progress."

— Volker Türk
United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights – OHCHR



From commitment to implementation: Our theory of change

Adopting a new perspective on management education

Business schools increasingly offer courses on Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainability, or Business and Society, reflecting growing student interest¹ in the societal impact of business. However, human rights education often remains limited to risk management – focusing on avoiding harm to companies rather than addressing the rights of affected stakeholders or exploring business opportunities.

Adopting a human rights framework creates clear standards for assessing company performance and encourages integration of human rights into core business practices. Leading companies now seek graduates with expertise in sustainability and human rights, recognizing these skills as essential for future leadership.

Students value employers with strong social and environmental commitments and want tools to differentiate genuine sustainability efforts from superficial claims.² The human rights perspective empowers students to identify sustainable business models that truly embed respect for human rights, broadens their understanding beyond profitability, and helps shape responsible business leaders ready to meet today's complex global challenges.

Integrating human rights into the curriculum

Business schools – as centers for critical thinking, not just technical training – play a key role in helping students navigate complex challenges, including human rights commitments. Human rights principles offer a vital perspective for understanding and guiding business decisions.

Incorporating human rights in management education aims to equip students to:

- Recognize human rights issues in business contexts.
- Analyze problems through a human rights perspective.
- Integrate human rights considerations into strategic and operational decisions.

The field of Business and Human Rights (BHR) is still emerging and spans many disciplines, making it difficult to place a dedicated core course in most business curricula. While popular electives exist, human rights are rarely required, and isolating the topic in a single course can unintentionally limit its broader adoption.

Whether or not a dedicated core or elective course on BHR exists, schools are encouraged to weave human rights considerations throughout existing courses. This approach ensures that students consistently engage with human rights alongside other key business concerns, such as ethics, corporate responsibility, profitability, and globalization. The table below illustrates how human rights topics can be meaningfully integrated into various subdisciplines of management.

Course or function	Examples of human rights themes
Accounting	Financial transparency, Tax evasion detection, Remediation cost tracking, Anti-corruption reporting
Business analytics	Algorithmic bias, Data privacy risks, Algorithmic discrimination, Workplace surveillance
Corporate governance	Board diversity, Human rights risk oversight, Stakeholder accountability, Whistleblower protection
Entrepreneurship	Rights-respecting business models, Inclusive innovation, Social entrepreneurship, Community-led solutions
Finance	Ethical investment screening, Divestment from rights-abusing sectors, Prevention of predatory lending practices, Financial inclusion
Human resources	Non-discrimination, Living wage compliance, Safe migration pathways, Freedom of association
IT Management	Data sovereignty, Ethical AI governance, Cybersecurity protection, Respect for digital rights
Leadership	Inclusive decision-making, Power imbalance mitigation, Ethical leadership training, Stakeholder engagement
Marketing	Deceptive advertising prevention, Cultural sensitivity, Avoiding exploitation of vulnerable groups, Truth-in-marketing
Operations management	Workplace safety, Hazardous work conditions, Right to disconnect, Religious accommodations
Organizational behaviour	Psychological safety, Inclusive team dynamics, Trauma-informed management, Collective bargaining support
Risk & compliance management	Human rights due diligence, Anti-bribery controls, Modern slavery reporting, Regulatory transparency
Supply chain management	Child labor prevention, Forced labor monitoring and remediation, Migrant worker protection, Indigenous land rights

Integrating human rights requires business schools to:

- **Align values and purpose.** Schools with clear goals emphasizing respect for human rights motivate faculty to include the topic across programs, creating lasting cultural change.

E.g. : HEC Paris and UC Berkeley Haas have launched dedicated BHR initiatives which led to support in research and teaching in the area as well as an elective on human rights.

- **Build supporting structures.** A foundational course on human rights or critical thinking strengthens student capacity to analyze complex challenges and helps tie together issues addressed throughout the curriculum. Similarly, extra-curricular activities help to reinforce values and purpose.

E.g.: Examples of such course offers include the Washington University's "Critical Thinking for Leadership" and Harvard Business School's "Leadership and Corporate Accountability".

- **Develop experiential learning.** Case studies, role-plays, debates, and immersive fieldwork bring human rights challenges to life, encouraging active engagement and critical reflection in real-world contexts.

E.g.: NYU Stern CBHR offers courses, research, and project-based learning focused on live BHR issues. University of Connecticut, through its Business & Human Rights Initiative, integrates internships, and practical and case-based courses into student learning.



Experts of the ILO-GBSN-UNIGE teaching resources workshop, 2022.

— 2 —

GSBN for BHR: A purpose-driven network for change

Joining the network

GSBN for BHR is a global network of business schools and scholars dedicated to integrating human rights into business education. It is part of GSBN and promotes human rights through research, teaching, and institutional change in business schools.

The network hosts an annual meeting at the University of Geneva. The meeting always takes place adjacent to the UN Forum on BHR, the world's largest annual gathering on business and human rights, with more than 2,000 participants from government, business, and civil society. While in-person participation is encouraged, joining the annual meeting online is also possible. GSBN for BHR also sends out regular newsletters to share updates, opportunities, and resources.

GSBN for BHR follows three main objectives:

– **Catalyze business school engagement**

Encourage schools to embed human rights into research, teaching, branding, and partnerships with the private sector.

– **Foster knowledge exchange**

Promote collaboration and peer learning by sharing ideas, strategies, and resources across institutions.

– **Enable collective action**

Support joint efforts within and beyond academia – through research, student initiatives, and educational tools – to advance and protect human rights globally.

For additional questions about GSBN for BHR, please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document on the website: <https://gsbn.org/gbsn-for-bhr/>.

[Business educators] have a key role to play in nurturing future business leaders who recognize the overwhelming interest in building societies that uphold human rights. [...] We need leaders who see that respect for human rights can bring about innovation and creativity – which are precisely what we need in times of crisis."

— Volker Türk
United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights – OHCHR

Engaging in the network

Overview of participating business schools



Although most of the GBSN for BHR's current members are based in [Europe and North America](#), the network is increasingly involving schools from [Asia, South America, the Middle East, and Africa](#) and is actively working to grow its reach in all regions of the world. GBSN for BHR currently comprises business school representatives in more than 40 countries.

Thematic research clusters

GBSN for BHR offers optional research clusters – member-led working groups that serve as knowledge hubs for deeper engagement on specific BHR topics.

These clusters foster exchange on human rights developments, discussion of members' work and joint activities like case studies, briefs, or podcasts. They meet periodically, share updates via internal chats, and collaborate on publications. Cluster leads are available to offer expert input or connect members with topic-specific or regional experts.

Current research clusters and cluster leads (as of July 2025):

Members of GBSN for BHR are welcome to join existing clusters or lead new ones.

Accounting, Finance & Investment

Prof. John Ferguson, *University of St Andrews*
(jff60@st-andrews.ac.uk)

Dr. Yingru Li, *University of Glasgow*
(yingru.li@glasgow.ac.uk)

Agriculture

Prof. Dorothee Baumann-Pauly, *University of Geneva*
(dorothee.baumann-pauly@unige.ch)

Dr. Berit Knaak, *University of Geneva*
(berit.knaak@unige.ch)

Climate Change, Human Rights & Fair Transitions

Prof. Karin Buhmann, *Copenhagen Business School*
(kbu.msc@cbs.dk & karbu@sam.sdu.dk)

Prof. Stephen Park, *University of Connecticut*
(stephen.park@uconn.edu)

Extractives

Dr. Sandy Chong, *Curtin University*
(email@sandychong.com)

Gender

Prof. Lara Bianchi, *University of Nottingham*
(lara.bianchi@nottingham.ac.uk)

Modern Slavery & Supply Chains

Charles Autheman, *HEC Paris*
(charles.autheman@gmail.com)

Technology

Prof. Björn Fasterling, *EDHEC Business School*
(bjorn.fasterling@edhec.edu)

Mariana Olaizola Rosenblat, *New York University*
(mor6562@stern.nyu.edu)



Stéphane Berthet (Vice rector, UNIGE), Volker Türk (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights), Michael Posner (Director of the NYU Stern CBHR), GBSN for BHR annual meeting, 2024.

Regional hubs

GBSN for BHR is exploring the development of **regional hubs** to deepen localized engagement and expand its global reach. These hubs will eventually serve as critical convening points for business schools within their respective geographic areas by facilitating peer learning, fostering faculty collaboration, and promoting the development of context-specific BHR curricula.

The vision is that these hubs will eventually be led by a regional academic partner and will undertake the following activities:

- Host quarterly convenings for local and regional GBSN for BHR members.
- Curate and share localized BHR case studies and teaching materials.
- Onboard and support new network members in the region.
- Contribute regional insights to the annual GBSN for BHR meeting and global curriculum development efforts.

In addition to strengthening the global network's capacity, these hubs will play a pivotal role in making BHR education more accessible, relevant, and actionable at the local level – strengthening regional collaboration and supporting sustainable integration of human rights into business education worldwide.

One example of a regional hub is the collaboration with Qatar University School of Management. We see this collaboration as a model for how schools in the network can partner with business schools in many countries in the Global South.

Illustration of a regional hub: Qatar casebook & the MENA Business Schools Alliance

Beginning in 2023, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the NYU Stern CBHR have been working with the Qatar University School of Management on a set of business case studies focused on issues pertinent to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Using NYU case studies as a model, a group of professors at Qatar University have drafted a series of regionally focused case studies. Representatives from NYU visited Doha in the fall of 2023 to review drafts and provide feedback. These case studies are scheduled to be published in 2025 in Arabic and English. Qatar University School of Management will use them in its own teaching and also circulate them to 13 other business schools in the MENA region.

If you are interested in leading a regional hub at your business school, please feel free to contact GBSN for BHR: bhr@gsbn.org.

GBSN for BHR Ambassadors from corporate practice

While academic institutions play a key role in advancing the integration of human rights into business education, concrete transformation also requires the involvement of business leaders who embody these values in practice. That's why GBSN for BHR launched the Ambassador Program – to engage experienced professionals from the private sector as active advocates for human rights within business schools.

These ambassadors contribute more than insights; they bring credibility, real-world experience, and a commitment to human rights that inspires both faculty and students. Their voices reinforce the urgency of embedding human rights into business decision-making.

Our pioneering Ambassadors include:

- [Matthew Kilgariff](#), Leader of the Governance & Sustainability Center at The Conference Board
- [Ron Popper](#), Chief Executive Officer of the Global Business Initiative on Human Rights

Their participation ensures that business schools benefit not only from academic frameworks, but from practical insights grounded in real-world corporate challenges and solutions.

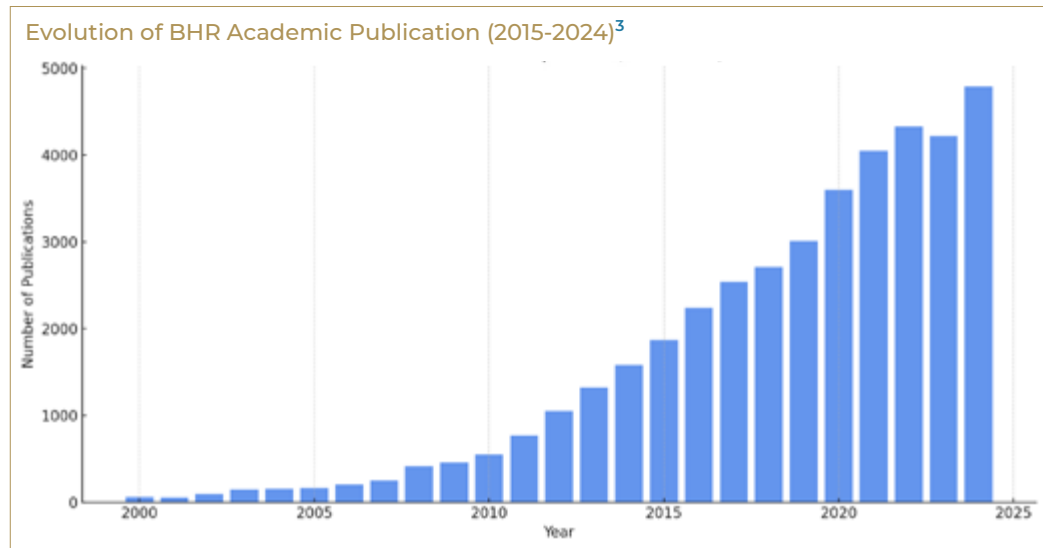
Matthew Kilgariff, Leader of the Governance & Sustainability Center,
The Conference Board

As the first GBSN Ambassador for Business and Human Rights in Europe, my journey has been both unique and deeply rewarding. Promoting BHR teaching methods and resources across business schools in Central and Eastern Europe has been met with genuine interest and enthusiasm from Deans and faculty members. Over time, valuable partnerships have taken shape, linking the GBSN for BHR with institutions from Vienna to Warsaw, and from Bucharest to Zagreb. These relationships continue to grow through shared challenges, co-developed case studies, and joint research initiatives.

— 3 —

BHR resources for research and teaching

Publishing BHR research



Academic research on BHR has gained momentum across leading business and management journals. Outlets such as the *Academy of Management Journal*, the *Journal of Management Studies* and the *Journal of Business Ethics* are increasingly publishing scholarship that addresses corporate responsibility and human rights risks.

Despite this progress, structural barriers remain. The field often contends with limited access to reliable performance data, while management journals tend to place a strong emphasis on theoretical framing and a preference for quantitative methods. Consequently, much of the current BHR literature still focuses on corporate policies and procedures rather than concrete human rights outcomes. Independent, practice-based research remains essential.

To address these challenges, BHR scholars have created space for targeted contributions through special issues in established management journals. In addition, the *Business and Human Rights Journal* (BHRJ), founded in 2016, has become a key platform for BHR scholarship. BHRJ special issues cover topics such as Latin America, gender and human rights, and AI, signaling continued thematic expansion.⁴ The BHRJ's visibility has grown significantly: in 2024, it received over 150 submissions and more than 178,000 downloads. Its articles are now widely cited, openly accessible⁵, and increasingly influential in both academic and policy debates. With a Scopus Q1 ranking in law and a 2.3 impact factor, the BHRJ ranks among the top 25 law journals globally.

This growth in academic BHR publications also reflects a broader shift in research funding priorities. Institutions such as the Horizon Europe program, and initiatives like Future Earth actively support interdisciplinary, impact-driven research. In this context, BHR research holds a unique position: it not only contributes to academic discourse, but also offers actionable insights for public policy, legal frameworks, and corporate governance. As academic norms continue to evolve, BHR research illustrates the potential to redefine scholarly impact, not just within academia but across sectors.

Conducting BHR research: Balancing perspectives and seizing opportunities for collaboration

Research in BHR often requires going beyond traditional academic methods. To evaluate the impact companies have on human rights and to provide practical recommendations, researchers need access to internal company practices as well as to affected workers and communities. This typically calls for collaboration with businesses, which can grant access to sites and interviews. However, maintaining academic independence is essential. Transparency regarding research funding helps ensure critical distance and credibility.

In addition to corporate input, it is vital to include perspectives from external stakeholders – civil society, academia, and local actors – to fully understand the human rights impacts of business activity. This engagement also helps researchers contextualize company practices within local legal and socio-economic frameworks.

BHR research thus fosters new forms of collaboration, not only with businesses and communities but also across academic institutions globally. It promotes the co-creation of knowledge that is both academically rigorous and practically useful. The field naturally lends itself to the creation of international research networks focused on impact and inclusivity.

BHR Young Researchers Summit for emerging scholars

Research on BHR topics is often interdisciplinary, bridging law, management, political science, philosophy, and other disciplines. The BHR Young Researchers Summit (YRS) offers a platform for emerging scholars in the field to present their work and engage with other BHR scholars.

The YRS is a two-day conference to help shape the research of PhD students and early postdocs from different disciplines and geographies. Engaging with business schools around the world is therefore essential to expanding the YRS' reach and attracting a broad community of emerging scholars. The Summit offers a space to share research, receive expert and peer feedback, and build a global academic network.

Launched in 2016, the Summit is co-organized by the Institute for Business Ethics (University of St. Gallen), the NYU Stern CBHR (New York University), the GCBHR (University of Geneva), and the Business and Human Rights Journal (BHRJ).

For each Summit, 12 to 15 participants are selected from 60 or more applicants. The conference fosters dialogue and collaboration between Global North and Global South scholars. Participation and accommodation are free, and scholars traveling from overseas receive a travel stipend. All YRS participants are welcomed into a global network of alumni which currently comprises over 100 former PhDs and postdocs, of whom about half work in academia and half in BHR practice and continue to shape the BHR field.

PhD supervisors are invited to encourage their students to apply for the YRS.

“The YRS was an invaluable opportunity for me to critically appraise and reflect upon each other’s work, to share ideas and innovations.”

— BHR Young Researchers Summit participant



Participants of the BHR Young Researchers Summit, 2024.

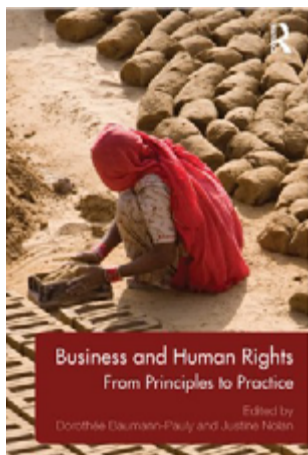
“Beyond the academic insights, the connections I made during the Summit were profoundly meaningful. Meeting like-minded researchers from around the world – each passionately committed to advancing human rights in business – created a strong sense of community and shared purpose.”

— BHR Young Researchers Summit participant

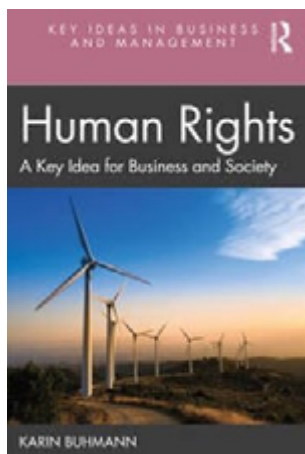
BHR teaching resources

Textbooks on business and human rights

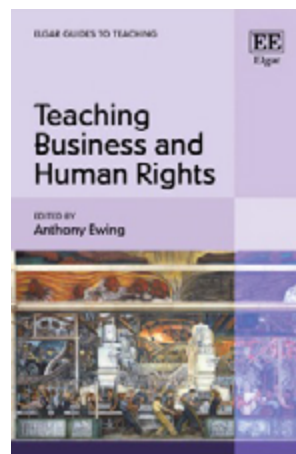
To support the integration of BHR into business school curricula, there are currently several textbooks that offer valuable insights, theoretical foundations, practical frameworks, and case-based approaches that can help deepen understanding of the dynamic relationship between business practices and human rights.



Baumann-Pauly, D., & Nolan, J. (2016). *Business and Human Rights: From Principles to Practice*. Routledge.



Buhmann, K. (2021). *Human rights: A Key Idea for Business and Society*. Routledge.



Ewing, A. (Ed.). (2023). *Teaching Business and Human Rights*. Edward Elgar Publishing.



Posner, M. H. (2024). *Conscience Incorporated: Pursue Profits While Protecting Human Rights*. NYU Press.



Wettstein, F. (2022). *Business and Human Rights: Ethical, Legal, and Managerial Perspectives*. Cambridge University Press.



Olsen, T. D., Schrempf-Stirling, J., & Van Buren, H. J., III (Eds.). (2023). *A Research Agenda for Business and Human Rights*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Collaboration with the International Labour Organization

In 2022, the GCBHR, GBSN, and the International Labour Organization (ILO) formalized their collaboration through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at advancing BHR education, with a particular focus on labor rights. This partnership has led to the development of open-access teaching resources and supports the integration of labor rights topics into business school curricula worldwide.

The teaching resources are the result of a unique collaboration between academic researchers, business school faculty, and ILO experts, combining practical experience with academic rigor. Current resources address critical topics such as fair recruitment and labor migration, as well as forced labor and decent work (for example in the fishing industry). Designed for global application, these resources are tailored to specific industries and geographic contexts, and support instructors seeking to embed human rights issues directly into business education.



Clinical education

The Business and Human Rights Clinic (BHR Clinic) enables small teams of students to collaborate with a partner organization (typically a company) over several months to develop concrete, actionable solutions to pressing human rights issues that the partner currently faces.

“We consider it a privilege to be working on a hands-on challenge and applying the theories and concepts learned in the classroom to a real-world situation. The experience of the BHR Clinic has further solidified our commitment to making a positive impact through our professional careers.”

— Collective statement from participants in the BHR Clinic at the University of Geneva

The BHR Clinic at the GBCHR, for example, is an elective course within the academic curriculum. Each BHR Clinic is structured around a clearly defined challenge submitted by the partner organization. Under the guidance of a senior researcher, the student team conducts in-depth research, engages with different stakeholder groups, and develops tailored recommendations or tools that are ready for implementation.

The BHR Clinic equips students with practical skills and knowledge to take on responsible leadership positions. In return, partner organizations benefit from fresh perspectives, cutting-edge academic insights, and support in advancing their human rights strategies. Through this co-creation model, the BHR Clinic prepares future business leaders to embed human rights into corporate practice, while contributing to the growing integration of human rights management in business education.

For more information, a toolkit on how to establish and conduct a BHR Clinic at a business school is available on the GCBHR website.

“The BHR Clinic was a real success for us and was worth the time we put in. For us, partnering in the BHR Clinic created real impact.”

— Partner organization of the BHR Clinic

Other experiential learning methods

Experiential learning encompasses a variety of pedagogical approaches, including consulting projects, internships, and project-based learning. These methods emphasize learning through action and reflection by immersing students in real or simulated situations. While experiential learning holds strong potential for advancing human rights education, it often relies on the incidental emergence of human rights issues rather than integrating them intentionally. Moreover, certain pedagogies – such as consulting – may not always position students as active decision-makers responsible for the ethical implications of their choices.

Without deliberate unpacking of experiences – particularly when examined through a human rights lens – meaningful learning remains elusive. This creates valuable opportunities for professors to guide students beyond efficiency-focused thinking, encouraging them to consider the broader implications and alternative approaches to the choices they make during experiential activities.

Immersive pedagogies extend beyond traditional experiential learning by positioning students as active decision-makers who must deliberately integrate BHR components. These approaches – including role-plays, debates, scenario-based courses, system-level field studies, and microsimulations – offer a distinct advantage over teaching abstract concepts by incorporating rich contextual factors. Since the application of human rights principles varies significantly across different contexts, whether shaped by history and culture, regulatory environments, or industry sectors, immersive teaching strategies enable students to navigate the genuine complexity of managing BHR challenges.

Case studies

Business school faculty around the world are developing case studies that examine human rights challenges across a wide range of sectors. Some of these cases are openly accessible, while others are available through academic publishers or by request. In the table below, we present a curated selection of both open-access and restricted-access case studies to support teaching and research in this field.

Additional real-world case examples can be found through the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC), which offers a searchable database by region, issue, and sector, as well as on the Case Center which is an independent, non-profit organization supporting and advancing the case method of teaching in management and related fields. Open-access case study series are also regularly published on the GCBHR website.

Sector	Case studies
Supply chain management in the garment industry	<p>Open access</p> <p>Baumann-Pauly, D., Massa, L., & Sheriff, N. (2020). <i>Manufacturing in Ethiopia: Decathlon's Partnership Model</i>.</p> <p>Padmanabhan, V. M., Baumann-Pauly, D., & Labowitz, S. (2015). <i>The Hidden Price of Low Cost: Subcontracting in Bangladesh's Garment Industry</i>.</p> <p>Restricted access</p> <p>Hsieh, N. H., Toffel, M. W., & Hull, O. (2019). <i>Global Sourcing at Nike</i>.</p> <p>Hsieh, N. H., & Chaturvedi, S. (2017). <i>The Ready-made Garment Industry: A Bangladeshi Perspective (A)</i>.</p> <p>Land, A., & Zakaria, R. (2019). <i>Rana Plaza Collapse, its Aftermath, and Future Implications for Sustainability</i>.</p> <p>Hoffman, S. (2014). <i>H & M's Global Supply Chain Management Sustainability: Factories and Fast Fashion</i>.</p>
Human rights challenges in the tech and telecommunications industries	<p>Open access</p> <p>Posner, M. (2020). <i>Role-play Exercise - Silverlake in China: Investor Responsibility for State Surveillance in Xinjiang</i>.</p> <p>Restricted access</p> <p>Harris, B., Ogilvy, A., & O'Rourke, J. S. (2006). <i>Google, Inc.: Entrance into the Chinese Market and Government Censorship</i>.</p> <p>Hoffman, A. (2014). <i>Taking a Bite out of Apple: Labor Rights and the Role of Companies and Consumers in a Global Supply Chain</i>.</p> <p>Schrempf, J. (2011). <i>Nokia Siemens Networks: Just Doing Business – or Supporting an Oppressive Regime?</i></p>

Sector	Case studies
Human rights challenges in the extractives sector	<p>Open access Baumann-Pauly, D. & Nolan, J. (2025). <i>Transforming the diamond value chain: HB Antwerp's model of radical transparency in Botswana</i>.</p> <p>Baumann-Pauly, D., Liberatore, I., & Posner, M. (2024). <i>Enabling a just transition to electric mobility: The integration of the informal mining sector</i>.</p> <p>Posner, M. & Baumann-Pauly, D. (2023). <i>Teaching case - Digging into the ethics of cobalt mining</i>.</p> <p>Restricted access Giamporcaro, S., & Putter, M. (2017). <i>Lonmin Plc: Mining and Responsible Investment – Dangerous Liaisons?</i></p> <p>Hennchen, E., & Lozano, J. M. (2012). <i>Mind the Gap: Royal Dutch Shell's Sustainability Agenda in Nigeria</i>.</p> <p>Hennchen, E. (2015). <i>Royal Dutch Shell in Nigeria: Where do Responsibilities End?</i></p> <p>Hsieh, N. H. (2015). <i>Putting the Guiding Principles into Action: Human Rights at Barrick Gold (A)</i>.</p> <p>Ghemawat, P., & Marciano, S. (2006). <i>De Beers at the Millennium</i>.</p>
Human rights challenges in the pharmaceutical industry	<p>Restricted access Buhmann, K., & Pedini Rasmussen, L. (2015). <i>Lundbeck's Pentobarbital Human-Rights Dilemma, or When Good Intentions Turn Lethal: Issue Management in a CSR Context</i>.</p>
Responsible sourcing for consumer goods - Agriculture, forestry and land use (AFOLU)	<p>Open access Baumann-Pauly, D., Nolan, J., & Symington, A. (2023). <i>Sourcing sustainable rubber: Veja's business model to help save the Amazon</i>.</p>
Human rights in finance and banking	<p>Open access Baumann-Pauly, D., & Trabelsi, L. (2021). <i>Financing commodities and human rights: The case of ABN AMRO in the palm oil sector</i>.</p>

“We need brave minds to re-think power and influence: to foster leaders who understand that decisions taken today should factor in their impact on human rights and our planet, for generations down the line. Not just for one electoral cycle; and not just for the length of a CEO’s term.”

— Volker Türk
United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights – OHCHR

— 4 —

Institutional models for integrating human rights

Testimonies from business schools

The following testimonies from business schools across the globe showcase diverse institutional efforts to embed human rights into business education. From curriculum innovation and executive training to interdisciplinary research centers and student-led clinics, these examples reflect regional adaptations, sector-specific priorities, and institutional strengths. Spanning almost every continent, the initiatives illustrate how human rights integration is shaped by local challenges and sectoral priorities while contributing to a shared global agenda. This diversity also reflects the ethos of the GBSN for BHR network, which fosters cross-border collaboration to empower a generation of business leaders equipped to uphold human rights.

Almut Schilling-Vacaflor and Markus Beckmann, School of Business, Economics and Society, Friedrich Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU), Germany

The School of Business, Economics and Society of Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg (FAU) plays an important role in the new Excellence Cluster Transforming Human Rights (2025-2032). As the principal investigators in this interdisciplinary cluster, we will contribute to enhance its research activities in relation to business and human rights in a context of fragmented economic globalization and planetary crises. We also co-lead the University's International Doctoral Program on BHR. The topic of business and human rights is also part of the curriculum of several study programs at the School of Business, Economics and Society, for instance in the bachelor courses International Politics, Transnational business governance for sustainable development and the master course on Business and human rights in Latin America. Our teaching has greatly benefitted from the 2020 toolkit 'The Case for Human Rights in Business Education'.

Camille Meyer and Cécile Feront, Graduate School of Business, University of Cape Town, South Africa

At the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business, resources from the GBSN for Business and Human Rights Impact Community (GBSN for BHR) have become integral to our teaching of human rights within our MBA, EMBA, and Development Finance curricula. These resources uniquely support critical engagement and interactive learning on human rights challenges within key sectors that are vital to African economies, including mining, agriculture, fishing, and tourism. Through case studies and practical research projects, students examine the systemic drivers behind human rights risks, identify early warning indicators, and craft effective risk assessment frameworks. This practical

approach equips future business leaders and finance professionals with the skills needed to proactively identify and manage human rights issues in business activities, including throughout value chains. These skills are essential for leaders operating in contexts characterized by regulatory gaps, enforcement challenges, and the structural vulnerability of certain groups of people.

Charles Autheman, HEC Paris, France

During the 2024-2025 academic year, I led a BHR Clinic in which six students from HEC's Sustainability and Social Innovation Master program worked to resolve a complex, real-world problem submitted by Schneider Electric, a French multinational enterprise operating in the energy sector. Under the guidance of an interdisciplinary team of academics and in close collaboration with key stakeholders within and outside the corporate partner, they spent seven months on the case, developing concrete and actionable recommendations that align with Schneider Electric's Social Excellence Program and its broader sustainability strategy. These recommendations were presented to all parties of the project during a final workshop organized at Schneider Electric headquarters mid-April 2025. HEC Paris has been running a legal clinic, the EU Public Interest Clinic, since 2014. This BHR Clinic extends the key tenets of clinical education (academic credit for participation, end beneficiaries are from vulnerable groups, students are supervised by faculty, knowledge application phase is preceded by knowledge acquisition phase) to business and human rights issues. It offers an opportune framework for students to learn about BHR issues by combining theoretical and practical activities.

Cláudia Marconi and Rafael Miranda, Centre of Excellence on Business and Human Rights, FECAP Business School, Brazil

Considering the lack of tradition in implementing human rights-related courses within Brazilian business schools, FECAP has taken a pioneering role by integrating BHR into its academic curricula. Supported by international funding (European Union), this initiative led to the creation of an undergraduate course, graduate modules, and a Visiting Scholars Program that welcomes one Brazilian and one European expert each semester. The project also enabled executive training programs and events for companies operating in Brazil, in partnership with Instituto Ethos – the leading civil society organization working on the BHR agenda in close collaboration with the private sector. This partnership has strengthened the project's ability to foster meaningful dialogue and support stronger human rights commitments. These efforts reflect a broader school-business-society nexus central to FECAP's approach to BHR. Advancing this agenda has required academic innovation and strategic institutional alignment. Sensitizing senior leadership to the importance of these themes, along with formal support from the European Commission, has been essential to ensure that BHR is sustainably embedded into FECAP's academic programs and outreach activities.

Elisa Giuliani, Responsible Management Research Center, Department of Economics and Management, University of Pisa, [Italy](#)

Founded in 2016, REMARC is a research center focused on interdisciplinary studies of responsible business practices and sustainable development policies. Its mission is to inform and influence both corporate leaders and policymakers, encouraging them to rethink how business is conducted, placing greater emphasis on environmental protection and respect for human rights. Since 2023, REMARC has been a key partner in the Rebalance Observatory on Capitalism and Democracy, a collaborative initiative involving seven European universities and an international NGO. Funded by the European Commission's Horizon Europe Programme and Innovate UK, the Observatory explores how corporate activities intersect with democratic values. The Observatory aims to provide new insights, resources, events, and learning tools to address growing concerns around corporate lobbying, human rights abuses, and collaboration with repressive regimes. It promotes business models that are more transparent, inclusive, and aligned with democratic and social priorities. Through its research and engagement efforts, REMARC contributes to shaping a more just and sustainable global economy – where business serves not only profit, but also people and the planet.

Karin Buhmann, Centre for Sustainability, Department of Management, Society and Communication, Copenhagen Business School, [Denmark](#)

Copenhagen Business School (CBS) is one of the few business schools globally offering dedicated BHR courses. Since 2016, I have led CBS's BHR efforts, including two BHR-specific courses – one for international business and politics students and another open to all business disciplines, attracting students from diverse backgrounds such as communication, IT, and philosophy. BHR content is also integrated into other sustainability-focused courses, and numerous master's theses are written annually on BHR topics. CBS conducts several BHR-related research projects and hosts seminars and conferences. CBS founded the BHRights Initiative, a global interdisciplinary BHR teaching and research network with over 50 members and recently launched an international network on Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement. Founded in 1917 and based in Copenhagen, CBS is one of Europe's largest and most respected business schools, known for its sustainability commitment and triple-crown accreditation (AMBA, EQUIS, AACSB). With over 19,000 students (2,900 international) and more than 600 researchers, CBS ranks highly internationally and maintains strong ties with industry. It is also a champion member of the UN's Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME).

Kenneth McPhail, Alliance Manchester Business School, The University of Manchester, United Kingdom

The Business and Human Rights (BHR) Catalyst at Alliance Manchester Business School was launched in 2016 through a donation from Lord David Alliance to support new frontier areas of research that will define the future of business thinking, practice, and innovation. Strongly aligned with the University of Manchester's Social Responsibility goal, the initiative enjoys broad institutional support. The BHR Catalyst was established with three aims: to produce world-leading interdisciplinary research; to draw on that research to inform effective practice and policy recommendations that have a real impact on the rights of some of the most vulnerable people in society; and to serve as a safe space for inter-disciplinary discussions between academics, policymakers, and businesses on the role of the private sector in relation to fundamental rights. Its work includes research on modern slavery, gender in global value chains, refugee rights, and human rights in digital technologies. The Catalyst also convenes international workshops with business schools worldwide and delivers executive education programs focused on embedding human rights into corporate governance.

Marcelo Olarreaga, Geneva School of Economics and Management, University of Geneva, Switzerland

The Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights (GCBHR) was launched in November 2019. It is hosted within the University of Geneva's School of Economics and Management (GSEM). It has two key missions: First, to train the next generation of business leaders in the rapidly changing landscape of business and human rights; second, to conduct applied research that helps feed into the first mission and is relevant to the Geneva ecosystem. Highlights of the last six years regarding the first mission include a student clinic on BHR that connects graduate students of the GSEM with managers of large multinationals headquartered in the region and facing human rights challenges in their supply chain, as well as the development of online training material. The applied research conducted by the GCBHR has focused on key sectors for the broad Geneva region: finance, trading and jewellery, making sure that the GCBHR makes the most of its strategic location in the capital of human rights.

Michael Posner, Center for Business and Human Rights, Stern School of Business, New York University, United States of America

The NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights (NYU Stern CBHR) was launched in March 2013. We benefited from the enthusiastic support of Peter Henry, then Dean of the Business School. He supported our early integration into the business school, by promoting our work with faculty and students and by providing our Center with essential early financial support. Our work is guided by an Advisory Council which includes leaders in business, academia, civil society, and philanthropy. They advise us on key aspects of our work, and open doors to policy makers, business leaders, and financial supporters. Our Center combines teaching, research, and public engagement. We have developed several separate courses and a series of topical case studies as well as other

teaching tools. Over the past 12 years, we have published more than 30 reports on human rights issues pertaining to global labor supply chains, digital threats to democracy, and corporate accountability through investing. These reports reflect our substantive expertise and follow our pro-business, high-standards approach.

Rachel Chambers and Stephen Park, School of Business, University of Connecticut, United States of America

The Business and Human Rights Initiative at the University of Connecticut (UConn) is a partnership between the Gladstein Family Human Rights Institute and the UConn School of Business. In collaboration with other programs and units at UConn and beyond, the Initiative supports and disseminates research by UConn faculty, including The Cambridge Handbook of Litigating Business and Human Rights Violations: Themes, Perspectives, and Prospects (forthcoming, Cambridge University Press). It organizes the Business and Human Rights Workshop, dedicated to works-in-progress and unpublished research, and convenes events that bring together researchers and practitioners – such as the February 2025 symposium on the Responsibilities of Investors for a Fair and Just Climate Transition, which will be featured in a forthcoming issue of the Business and Human Rights Journal (BHRJ) Blog. The Initiative engages with policymakers, businesses, and stakeholders to promote respect for human rights, including consultations for the 2024 U.S. National Action Plan on Responsible Business Conduct. It also enhances student learning and career development through specialized courses and degree programs in business and human rights, as well as internships in the field. These efforts aim to equip students and stakeholders with the knowledge and tools needed to promote accountability and social responsibility in business.

Vasu Srivibah, Sasin School of Management, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

In Southeast Asia, human rights are not distant concerns for many of us. Environmental degradation and other sustainability issues have intensified challenges for rights holders within business supply chains, especially among vulnerable communities. As an institution committed to preparing our learners for tomorrow's world, Sasin School of Management is ensuring that our students are equipped not only with the right tools but also with the right mindset to navigate the future responsibly. At Sasin School of Management, human rights are integrated as an element of IDEALS – Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access to Learning at Sasin. In partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), we launched the Inclusion Toolkit for Organizations and Businesses in 2024. This toolkit supports the creation of truly inclusive cultures by offering readiness checklists, planning aids, and tailored recommendations. In our strategic management class, human rights are addressed through consulting cases that challenge students to apply strategic frameworks to real-world human rights issues. We also look forward to collaborating with local partners to deepen this work in the future.

Victor Cabezas Alban, The Wharton School of Business, University of Pennsylvania Law School, United States of America

In Latin America, human rights are still regarded by many business leaders as the exclusive domain of governments, politicians, or NGOs. Yet nothing could be further from reality. Human rights permeate every segment of a company's value chain – from its employees and suppliers to its customers, the communities it affects, and its broader network of partners. Addressing these dimensions through finance, talent management, compliance, and operations, and grounding the conversation in real-world cases, has immense transformative potential. Private firms increasingly shape the daily lives of Latin Americans, and our region offers repeated, tragic examples of what happens when senior leadership ignores human rights risks. Far from being an ideological or political matter, human rights constitute a question of corporate responsibility, viability, and risk management. Bringing these discussions into a business school environment therefore represents an opportunity for outsized impact: it equips future managers with the perspective and tools they need to embed respect for human dignity at the heart of sustainable business strategy.

Together, these testimonies demonstrate that human rights are no longer just a compliance issue for corporations, but also a strategic imperative for business education. Through research, teaching, and public engagement, business schools are equipping students with both the critical mindset and practical tools to navigate today's most pressing human rights challenges. While approaches vary across regions and institutions, these efforts signal a paradigm shift: one where business leaders are trained to balance profitability with accountability, innovation with equity, and growth with justice. The journey is far from over, but these initiatives lay the foundation for a global movement to redefine business success so that it is not just about performance, but also about purpose. For business schools still hesitant to embrace this agenda, such testimonies provide both inspiration and a practical roadmap.



Dorothee Baumann-Pauly (Director of the GCBHR), Manuela Tomei (Assistant Director-General for Governance, Rights and Dialogue in the ILO), Dan LeClair (CEO of GBSN), launch of the MoU, 2022.

— ENDNOTES —

¹ See, for example: Jack, A., “Students are driving the agenda”, *Financial Times*, October 18, 2023, <https://www.ft.com/content/eea7146d-bf27-49d9-a80d-874eed3043d1>

² See, for example: Watson, B., “The troubling evolution of corporate greenwashing”, *The Guardian*, August 20, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2016/aug/20/greenwashing-environmentalism-lies-companies>; and Gatti, L., Seele, P., & Rademacher, L., “Grey zone in-greenwash out”, *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*, 4(6), 2019, <https://jcsr.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40991-019-0044-9>

³ Google Scholar, advanced search for peer-reviewed publications using “business and human rights” in the title, key words, abstract or journal, June 2025.

⁴ Cambridge University Press. (2024). *Business and Human Rights Journal – Call for papers: Special Issue on “AI, Business, and Human Rights”*. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/business-and-human-rights-journal/announcements/call-for-papers/call-for-p>

⁵ Cambridge University Press. (s. d.). *About this journal. Business and Human Rights Journal*. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/business-and-human-rights-journal/information/about-this-journal>

“To be a good business person, you need to know as much in the future about sustainability as you know about sales. You need to know as much about climate change as you do about cash flow. You need to know as much about international development as you do about business development.”

— Paul Polman
Co-Founder of IMAGINE,
Former CEO of Unilever



GENEVA CENTER
FOR BUSINESS
& HUMAN
RIGHTS



UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE
GENEVA SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS
AND MANAGEMENT

NYU STERN

Center for Business
and Human Rights

Photos:
Cover: Getty Image,
Pages 4, 9, 12, 17, 19, 28, 30: GCBHR
Design:
Justine Gaxotte (justinegaxotte.com)
Copyright © 2025 University of Geneva.
All Rights Reserved

JOIN THE NETWORK

GBSN for BHR welcomes management scholars who are working on or are interested in business and human rights. Membership is free of charge.

Why you should join

- Gain access to a diverse global network of BHR scholars
- Benefit from and co-create teaching resources and new pedagogical approaches
- Stay informed and discuss the latest developments in the BHR field
- Contribute to transforming business education

What is expected from you

- Engage actively in the network
- Integrate human rights in your research and teaching
- Advocate for the integration of human rights in business education
- Encourage interested colleagues to join the network

Scan the QR code to join



Contact at GBSN
bhr@gbsn.org

FAQ
<https://gbsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/GBSN-for-BHR-FAQ.pdf>

Website
<https://gbsn.org/gbsn-for-bhr/>

Sign-up form
<https://share.hsforms.com/2NTq2aZxeTP-BjNaR4xPLAwrwx0m>

Share news
<https://rwx0m.share.hsforms.com/2FsJHSQCoQOKaukStgHOrtQ>

