



Business & Human Rights  
Resource Centre



# Strategic Plan

2021-24

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# Business & Human Rights Resource Centre

## Our unique role

Since our founding in 2002, Business & Human Rights Resource Centre has played a constructive role at the heart of the global business and human rights movement. Current conditions in this and the next decade encourage us to continue working to advance human rights in societies and to seize opportunities and prospects to create conditions of shared security and shared prosperity.

In the next four years, we will support the movement for human rights in business to transform corporate behaviour through regulation, norms, and leadership, and help uphold the rights of those facing abuse. Fair, objective and data-driven, our work with allies will focus on the rights of workers in global supply chains; rights of communities seeking responsible natural resource use and a just transition; and the rights of people to accountable digital technologies. We will act to amplify the voices of those facing abuse, especially human rights defenders and their communities. We will promote gender justice and corporate legal accountability.

To achieve this, we will increase transparency, build accountability, help strengthen movements, and influence decision-makers through partners and directly.

As an online global resource with a commitment to provide free and public data in ten languages and as an organisation with a robust presence in all regions, we provide a unique source of information and expertise on business and human rights. Our victim-focused approach; independence from corporate funding; willingness to speak truth to power; commitment to 'make', rather than 'take', space from partners and allies; and vast experience in engaging constructively with business and government allow us to continue driving solutions towards business models and government regulations that truly promote and respect human rights.

# Global context



The Business and Human Rights (BHR) movement is fundamentally shaped by three underlying drivers of abuse: inequalities of power and wealth in society; poor and unaccountable governance; and the climate breakdown caused by unsustainable exploitation of the natural environment. From these underlying drivers of abuse, Business & Human Rights Resource Centre also observes significant trends, positive and negative, that will shape its work over the next four years.

➔ **Profit maximisation model serves vested interests and deprives people of power.** The business model of short-term profit maximisation externalises social and environmental costs, driving unsustainable inequality and an ecological crisis. Efforts to drive transformational change through voluntary business-driven models, multi-stakeholder initiatives, and social audits have fallen short in the mission to address the impacts of human rights abuse.

- ➔ **Authoritarian actors and rules restrict civic freedoms.** As a result, the global governance crisis has created a chilling effect on the work of highlighting abuse and neglect by companies around the world. Various forms of violence and judicial harassment to severely restrict the exercise of fundamental rights are rising, with very little progress in the development of effective remedies.
- ➔ **Continued technological developments increase human rights risks.** While advances in technology present new possibilities for protecting human rights, rapid developments in artificial intelligence, automation, and other technologies also pose serious human rights risks spanning a broad range of issues, from surveillance to crackdowns on worker and community organising. Notable progress in addressing privacy concerns is being made, but much work is needed to make the technology sector accountable for its impacts on other rights.
- ➔ **Accelerating demand for just transition to net-zero carbon economies.** A transition away from exploitation of fossil fuels and other carbon-intensive industries has just begun despite accelerated demand. Supporting a fast and fair transition to net-zero carbon economies requires corresponding attention to the fact that the rapid expansion of renewable energy and attendant demand for land, water, and mineral resources is also replicating widespread patterns of abuse seen in the extractive sector.
- ➔ **Responsive corporates, investors and governments act on human rights challenges through policy reform.** Rising pressure from the public and civil society is pushing them to respond to human rights challenges through policy reform that complies with internationally recognised standards, instead of depending only on voluntary action that cannot result in transformational changes. Leading governments and business actors are now building on evidence that rights-respecting operations are commercially viable and resilient. Effective regulation, including that requiring mandatory human rights due diligence, is now gaining more support worldwide.
- ➔ **Social movements are building networks for power for human rights.** As the challenging trends evolve, Business & Human Rights Resource Centre is encouraged by the collaborations and alliances that are being formed across the business and human rights, labour, environmental/climate, and other movements. This convergence of movements is critical to create new sustainable futures and to slow and reverse the collapse in public trust of global markets. In many countries, social movements, using networked power strategies, are building cross-sectoral and inter-generational alliances to press governments for transformational change, including in business and markets.
- ➔ **Unpredictable and influential events.** In addition to these identifiable trends, the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2008 Global Economic Crisis illustrate that our inter-connected world is highly vulnerable to unforeseen systemic shocks that disrupt or collapse global markets and shift public trust and political cultures. Our movement needs to prepare for a range of contingencies with agility and resourcefulness, ensuring continued relevance and the ability to seize opportunities from crisis to advance human rights in business.

# Our strategic framework

## Vision

Our vision is a world where business respects human rights and provides redress for abuse, where people are leaders in shaping a rights-respecting and sustainable future for markets and business, and where shared prosperity through greater equality of power and wealth is enjoyed by all.

## Mission

We work to strengthen partners, allies, and movements so that our collective work ensures that businesses respect and advance human rights, and build shared prosperity through greater equality.

We seek to build, analyse and deploy evidence to influence decision-makers in governments and businesses towards effective laws, regulation, and norms that transform exploitative business behaviour into a rights-respecting economic model. We amplify and support the voices and works of partners, allies, and movements to drive accountability for abuse.

## Outcomes

- ➔ Equality of power in negotiations by workers, communities, and their organisations with business actors.
- ➔ Government rules and incentives that insist companies and investors respect human rights in their business operations and through their supply chains, and contribute to diminished inequality, shared prosperity, and the reversal of climate breakdown.
- ➔ Businesses and investors transform their business models to end abuse, respect the rights of workers, communities and peoples, stop harming the climate and environment, and are held to account for abuse.



# Our model of change

## Our vision

Shared prosperity, sustainability, and equality in economies  
Business respects human rights and provides redress  
Workers and communities help shape markets and business

## Outcomes

**SYSTEM-WIDE SHIFTS IN BUSINESS MODELS THROUGH:**

- ▶ Government regulations and incentives on rights and climate
- ▶ Equality of power in negotiation
- ▶ Company and investor action

**CHAMPIONS**  
Governments  
Investors  
Companies  
Media

**BLOCKERS**  
Governments  
Investors  
Companies  
Media

Support & Collaborate

BHR movement shifts the terms of the debate

Expose & Grow risk

## Our approaches

Working for and with our allies and partners

- ▶ Drive accountability and transparency
- ▶ Strengthen partners and alliances
- ▶ Influence decision-makers

To achieve our organisation’s mission, we must recognise that there is fierce contest between the broad movement for advancement (“champions”) of progressive change, and the determined power of those with a vested interest in the status quo (“blockers”). The blockers generally have high degrees of access to and influence over governments and regulatory bodies, and invest heavily in highly professional lobbying, public relations and communications strategies to maximise their influence. To achieve a rights-respecting and sustainable future for business and markets, the work of the “champions” must deliver compelling, innovative propositions and a diverse movement able to counter the power and influence of the blockers or those with vested interest in the exploitative status quo. We seek to build and support three broad agents of change so that they can be champions for the advancement of progressive change.

## Civil society

Civil society, through movements of networked power and effective use of press and social media, is able to anticipate, strengthen and amplify the voice and action of the people in order to generate pressure, encouragement and opportunity for change. With data, innovative strategies and solidarity, civil society is able to highlight and reward both incremental and transformational progress in human rights and business. These also allow us to expose abuse and grow risk for governments, companies and their investors that choose to pursue irresponsible actions, or turn their backs on injustice and global threats.

**Our role:** The Resource Centre seeks to support and strengthen our movement’s global network of partners and allies. We will use our digital platform for action to bolster the voice and actions of workers, communities and people, especially those in difficult contexts, and support their assertiveness in their own advocacy for human rights in business. As we continue to support non-legal avenues for redress, we will also seek to strengthen legal remedies through our promotion of accountability and strategic litigation. Where useful, we add our own voice, based on the rich evidence we collate, to strengthen the demands of partners, allies and wider coalitions.

## Enlightened investors and business

Voluntary change by enlightened companies and investors contributes to the transformation of corporate practice as it demonstrates the commercial viability and resilience gained from responsible business models. Investors, as the owners of capital, can play a central role in defining the purpose of the corporation, and companies’ performance on human rights. Their power is magnified when they advocate for regulations that embed responsible models of business and sanction abuse. Nevertheless, the majority of companies and investors continue to neglect their obligations to respect human rights, and lobby against regulatory advances.

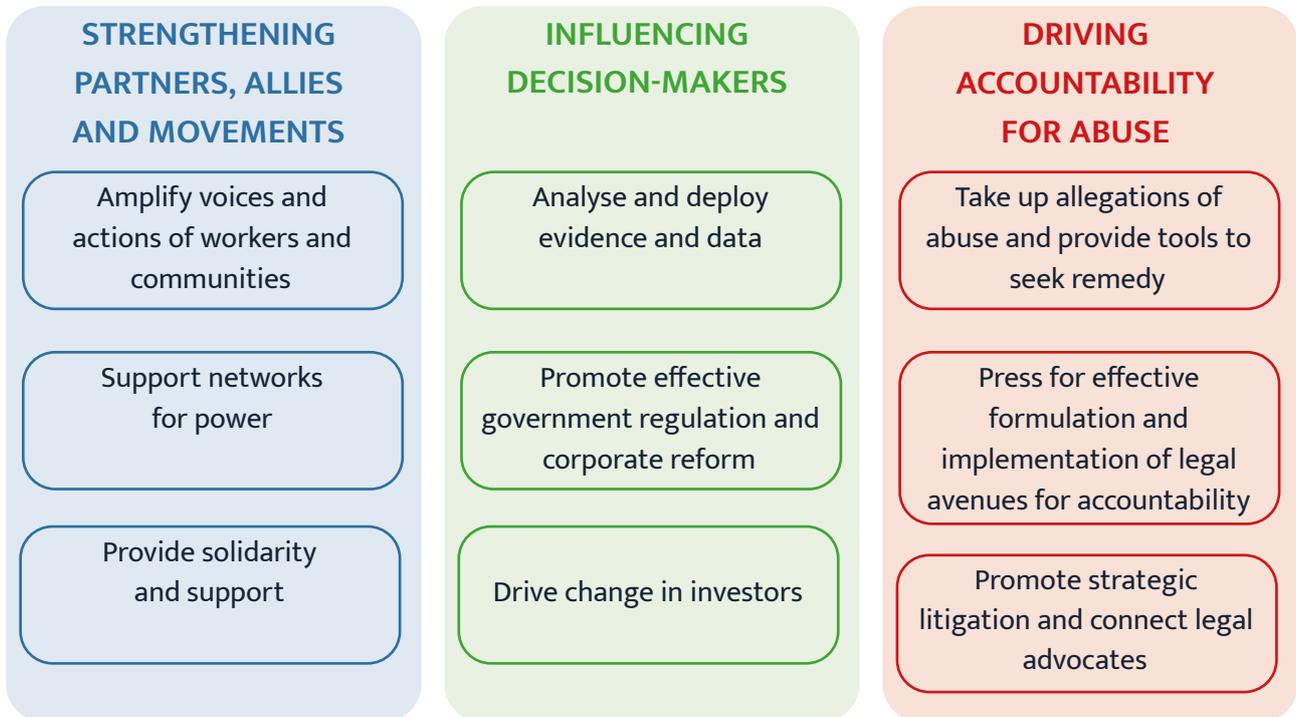
**Our role:** The Resource Centre encourages investor and corporate leadership in human rights by rewarding progress, while also creating strong reputational risk to abusive companies. We do this through our benchmarks, company trackers and dashboards, and we take up 600 grassroots allegations of corporate abuse with companies each year. We use our digital platforms to highlight responsible business voices for a new social contract and regulatory advances in human rights and climate as part of our diverse movement for change.

## Governments

The pace of implementation of human rights due diligence and remedy by the majority of global business has been glacial. Despite positive exceptions, the extent of corporate abuse continues to create urgent demand for governments to commit to a “smart mix” approach: where standards in regulatory action and incentives by responsive and accountable governments raise the floor of corporate behaviour in human rights and climate justice, in due diligence, protection, and remedy.

**Our role:** The Resource Centre, with allies, provides responsive governments with compelling data and analysis on the failures of voluntary and ‘nudge’ approaches, and for the imperative of regulatory action to tackle unsustainable inequality and climate breakdown. We work with partners and allies outside and inside governments and parliaments to deliver compelling propositions for action on business regulation and incentives. We work with the broad and unusual coalition of ‘champions’ to make these issues increasingly ‘electorally dangerous’ – where politicians realise their sustained office depends upon action in this area because of real or anticipated public outcry around inaction.

# Our approaches



We work with our global network of partners and allies to continually strengthen our collective effort to generate, collect, analyse and deploy critical information for the advancement of human rights in business. Our work is focused on the following three approaches:

## Strengthening partners, allies and movements

- ➔ **Amplify voices and actions of workers and communities.** Our work with partners reaffirms to us the value of collaboration, where we harness our strengths to define and achieve particular goals for the protection and advancement of human rights in business. Partners value our unique ability to amplify their voices and work to a diverse global audience. We will use our existing tools and then innovate and evolve for new ones, so that we can effectively tell human stories and highlight the core values that underpin both the struggles and hopes of workers and communities.
- ➔ **Support networks for power.** Working across movements and through convergence and deeper collaboration, we will use our digital action platform as a hub for elevating thought leadership on human rights in business, advancing both urgent and long term demands of workers and communities.
- ➔ **Provide solidarity and support.** Committed to building relationships of mutual respect, equality, and solidarity, we will use existing tools and co-develop new ones that are fit for purpose. We will use our digital tools to help build capacity in areas where expertise is lacking. We will continue providing support through connecting people, supporting networks, raising local voices to international spheres

(where requested), supporting allies' funding opportunities, and actively helping with safety and protection.

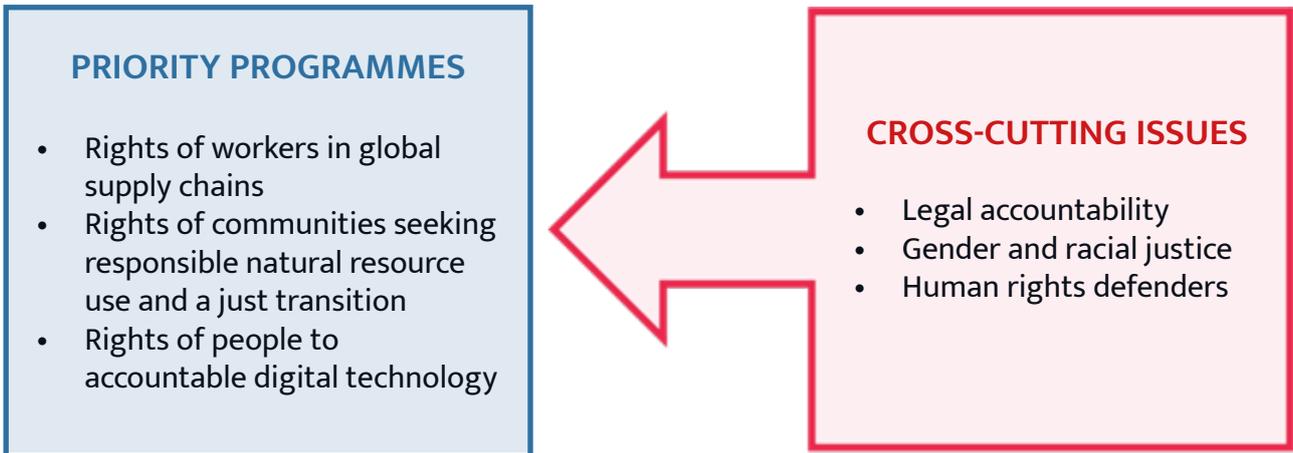
## Influencing decision-makers

- ➔ **Analyse and deploy evidence and data.** We will continue our evolution from providing evidence, towards analysis of our own data with partners to more directly influence the policy, practice and performance of companies, investors and governments, as the most powerful actors in markets.
- ➔ **Promote effective government regulation and corporate reform.** We will work with partners and allies to push for effective forms of mandatory human rights due diligence and stronger corporate accountability, and actively participate in debates around the post-pandemic economy and the purpose of the corporation and its role in society, where we are able to add a distinctive voice.
- ➔ **Drive change in investors and financiers.** We will explicitly include in our model of change efforts to influence enablers of corporate abuse, including investors, markets, financiers, industry associations, certification bodies and employees.

## Driving accountability for abuse

- ➔ **Take up allegations of abuse and seek remedy.** Every year, we take up over 600 allegations of abuse through our company response mechanism. We will strengthen this powerful tool for transparency and accountability. We document 400 allegations of attacks each year on defenders working on business and human rights. We will maximise our documentation checklist and train workers, communities and human rights defenders to use it to accurately tell stories of abuse in their areas of work when seeking and then gaining accountability.
- ➔ **Press for effective implementation of regulation and legal avenues for accountability.** Legal protections for workers, communities and human rights defenders are too often ignored. Working with partners, we will press for effective redesign and implementation of laws and regulations. Access to remedy is a critical aspect for the work towards human rights in business. We will continue our work on analysing and proposing clear standards for accountability including those related to land rights, procurement in supply chains, and trade and investment agreements.
- ➔ **Support strategic litigation and connect legal advocates.** Our support for strategic litigation will continue with our analysis and reporting of strategies and outcomes of lawsuits, especially those that impact workers, communities and peoples in our three priority programmes. We will highlight and connect legal advocates around the world and provide a platform to explore and amplify diverse perspectives on various legal issues. We will also focus on Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) in order to understand their evolving nature across geographies and to propose reforms in regulations.

# Priority programmes and cross-cutting issues



## Where we work

- ➔ Africa
- ➔ Asia and Pacific
- ➔ Europe
- ➔ Latin America
- ➔ Middle East & North Africa
- ➔ North America



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While we continue to monitor and report on business and human rights across all issue areas and sectors, we also identify our priority programmes of work in each strategic plan. In doing so, we focus on those most at risk of abuse, and where we believe there is greatest opportunity for positive change. We closely monitor trends to ensure that we are covering urgent and emerging threats such as those coming from global supply chains, technology and the just transition to a net-zero carbon economy. In choosing our priority programmes of work, we also assess our organisational strength and our utility to the movement so we can ensure that our work will add value to global efforts in these areas.

# Our priority programmes for 2021-2024

## 1. The rights of workers in global supply chains

The Resource Centre has maintained a strong focus on labour rights throughout its 18-year history, and labour rights have been a key strategic priority in our 2017-2020 Strategic Plan. In the coming four years, our labour rights-related work will focus on tackling the challenges associated with global supply chains – where the greatest inequality, insecurity and abuse resides. With our global platform and access to relevant economic actors, we will support and advance the labour rights demands of working people in global supply chains by: urging reform of business models, purchasing practices, and policies that drive abuse; reshaping investor and financier decision-making around worker rights; and pressing for improved local and international workers' rights and regulation in the context of great pressures from automation, migration, and the need for a just transition. Our approach over the next four years will be heavily informed by the pandemic and its harm to workers' interests, alongside our movement's efforts to ensure a just recovery for workers.

## 2. The rights of communities seeking responsible natural resource use and a just transition

The natural resources sector remains the largest sector of abuse globally, according to our data, with more than 2.5 times as many allegations of abuse as any other sector. As we press for a just transition to a net-zero carbon economy, we must particularly monitor and address rising human rights risks associated with the rapid push for access to critical transition minerals needed for renewable energy technology, as well as the risks related to the deployment of renewable energy on the ground. Without robust due diligence, both can harm communities, including indigenous peoples, who continue to bear the burden of natural resource exploitation on their land and waters, on which their lives and livelihood often depend. Our work in the coming four years will focus on promoting respect and the protection of rights of communities in the context of the just transition. We will prioritise promoting a rights-respecting approach to the deployment of renewable energy; pressing for increased respect for human rights in the transition mineral supply chains that fuel the renewable energy industry; and pushing for accountability for fossil fuel companies contributing to the climate breakdown.

## 3. The rights of people to accountable digital technologies

The Resource Centre has already begun to deepen its focus on the technology sector in response to a rise in threats and attacks against fundamental rights through the use of digital technologies and platforms. Alongside digital technology's emancipatory potential, there are also numerous human rights risks and cases of abuse. This includes the targeting of human rights defenders through surveillance technology, attacks on the exercise of civic freedoms by workers, communities and peoples, and discrimination due to algorithmic bias, as a few examples. In the coming four years, the Resource Centre will explore how we

can help address these risks and contribute to norm-setting, regulation, transparency and accountability in the technology sector, especially in relation to the role technology companies (and their investors) play in protecting or undermining human rights. We will support movements, engage with investors and other key stakeholders, provide platforms for debate, and develop tools to press for corporate accountability when technology and its corporate actors threaten fundamental rights and human security.

**We will strengthen our priority programmes with a focus on three cross-cutting issues: access to legal accountability, promotion of gender and racial justice and the protection of human rights defenders. Each of these plays a key part in our model of change:**

- ⊕ **Access to corporate legal accountability** is a cross-cutting issue for all our priority programmes because without consequences for their actions, unscrupulous companies are likely to continue their abuse, and those whose rights have been violated will lack access to effective remedy. In promoting accountability, we will continue to support strategic litigation, particularly in relation to our thematic focus areas, and creating legal networks to support accountability. We will also continue to support legislative and regulatory changes, and enforcement of those changes, that prevent violations of human rights and provide redress for violations.
- ⊕ **Promotion of gender and racial justice** is a cross-cutting issue for all of our priority programmes. The inequalities in power and opportunity hinder the achievement of shared prosperity that our movement envisions for the world, and drive exclusion, discrimination and oppression. As an underpinning driver of abuse, inequality leads to systemic disregard of rights and opportunities of groups of people based on their class, race, gender, nationality and other attributes. Guided by our organisational gender justice strategy, our work across our priority programmes focuses on challenging patriarchal narratives, building solidarity with feminist movements, and spotlighting concerns that rarely get attention in various discourses. Our priority programmes use this approach to strengthen allies and movements, influence decision-makers in government and business to reform business models to dismantle inequalities of power, and hold businesses accountable for discrimination.
- ⊕ **Protection and support of human rights defenders** is a cross-cutting issue for all of our priority programmes because those who work to oppose corporate abuse are among those most at risk of abuse themselves. Human rights defenders have a right to conduct human rights work individually and in association with others free from attack and restrictions. Equally, protecting the work of defenders benefits and empowers many others. Our priority programme areas are also those in which defenders – including trade unionists and labour organisers, land and environmental activists, and digital privacy advocates – are most under threat. We will work with our networks of allies to continue documenting attacks against human rights defenders and supporting their protection; analyse our data to identify trends that can support effective responses; and be in service of and support to human rights defenders and relevant national, regional and global networks.

# Organisational growth and development

## Organisational capacity and structure

Since the Resource Centre's last Strategic Review, the organisation has more than doubled in size in terms of personnel and resources. From 2015 to 2020, the Global Team grew from 26 to 60. We are now registered in five countries and have team members in 21 countries. Our income increased from £1.38 million to a projected £3.4 million, and the number of funded projects we are implementing doubled. Between 2016 and 2020, website users increased by 105%, from 919,580 to 1,885,292, from an increasingly diverse set of countries, particularly in the Global South. Company responses went from 300 per year to over 600. This growth is a testament to the importance of the business and human rights movement to global and national challenges, and we hope that this reflects the value the Resource Centre is seen to bring by our partners, allies and funders.

## Demonstrating Impact & Sharing Knowledge – Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL)

The Resource Centre is focused on external impact. As a learning organisation, we will further develop our system to measure our impact, effectiveness and efficiency through systems for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) so that we create for ourselves evidence and spaces for reflection and accountability, and refinement for our work, our strategies and our partnerships. Enhancing our MEAL systems will strengthen our model of transformational and systemic change and the strategic coherence of the Global Team's work. We will use MEAL to proactively align our thematic and regional strategies to our model of change. We will refine and, where necessary, develop indicators that enable learning from the delivery of our strategy for the coming four years, focusing on impact, outcomes and outputs relevant to the whole organisation. We will also improve processes to collect, understand, share and manage data that can monitor and convey our impact and facilitate learning.

# Finance and fundraising

Our overall growth in the next strategic plan period will be constrained and bound by our ability to raise unrestricted funds to invest in our support and management functions to ensure balanced growth. Our ambition will be to increase our impact through income growth of around 10-15% each year. At least 50% of this growth must be in unrestricted income, and overall growth will be constrained if unrestricted income is not available. By meeting a 50% unrestricted income contribution target for new projects, we can continue to strengthen our core work and support our global team's ability to be agile and responsive to the evolving needs of our work and those of our partners and allies. In order to achieve this growth, we will need to increase our fundraising, finance and personnel capacity. In addition, further investment in communications will be required to promote visibility of the organisation and our allies and partners, with a view to increasing opportunities for fundraising.



## **Business & Human Rights Resource Centre**

2021 - 2024

**Business & Human Rights Resource Centre** is an international NGO that tracks the human rights impacts of over 10,000 companies in over 180 countries, making information available on our nine language website.