Since 2005 the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre has approached companies over 3800 times to respond to allegations of human rights abuse. Our average global response rate is 70%, and some years it has been over 80%. Below are some examples of our global impact since 2015.

**Supported victims of Samarco dam disaster to bring claims to stakeholders**

November 2018 marked the third anniversary of the Samarco dam collapse, one of Brazil’s worst environmental disasters which killed 19 people, destroyed villages, and polluted the water supplies for hundreds of thousands of people. In partnership with Caritas and Ford Foundation the Resource Centre arranged for representatives from affected communities to share their experiences and raise awareness of their ongoing fight for remedy in person with key stakeholders in London.

They had meetings with civil society, parliamentarians and investors, and with BHP Billiton (the dam was a joint venture between BHP and Vale). A legal expert who accompanied, said: “This meeting was a critical moment for the communities, who have been waiting three years for adequate remedy. Never before have they had the chance to talk directly to BHP HQ. We hope this is the start of a more direct and meaningful dialogue between BHP and the communities affected by the disaster.” BHP gave another public apology and reaffirmed their commitment to remediation and compensation. We are looking to roll out this model in future.

**Inspired a race to the top by companies through public rankings**

In 2018 the latest iterations of our public rankings and benchmarks confirmed we are having a positive influence over the policies and practices of a substantial number of the largest global companies. KnowTheChain (a partnership with Humanity United, Sustainalytics, and Verité), which ranks companies on their efforts to address forced labour risks in their supply chains, received excellent feedback. Business representatives and investors told us that they are using the tool to prioritise the issue of forced labour internally and inspire positive change throughout their supply chains. Most companies had improved upon their 2016 ranking.

In addition the latest iteration of the Corporate Human Rights Benchmark – the world’s first open and public benchmark of corporate human rights performance, of which we are a founding member - showed a cluster of leading companies emerging who are competing to be the ‘best in class’, and each has made progress since our pilot benchmark to ensure they do not fall behind their direct competitors.

"The KnowTheChain initiative, along with the Corporate Human Rights Benchmark, are helping us shape our human rights roadmap."

– company representative

Strong coverage of the benchmark in the Financial Times, Wall Street Journal and Reuters highlights that laggard companies are exposed to increasing reputation risk on human rights negligence, and investors should take this into account in their investment decisions. In 2019, the CHRB suspended Vale from its latest ranking following the Brumadinho dam collapse in Brazil that killed over 200 people.
Examples of Impact

Coordinated companies to issue statement in support of human rights defenders and civic freedoms


The statement is the first of its kind, and stresses that when human rights defenders are under attack, so is sustainable and profitable business. It stresses that the protection of civic freedoms and respect for the rule of law are vitally important for both civil society and business, and that free, open societies enable well-functioning markets, stable financial systems and good governance. Governments and investors everywhere are, as a result, taking notice that a group of major brands are calling for these protections.

Influenced oil company to drop SLAPP lawsuit against Azeri NGO

According to Azeri labour law, a person of retirement age cannot be dismissed without their consent. Contrary to this, Salyan Oil - a joint venture of State Oil Company of Azerbaijan and China National Petroleum Corporation – permits itself to dismiss employees of retirement age.

In 2018 the firm filed a lawsuit against two former employees regarding a dispute over their unfair dismissal on the grounds of their age. The employees were represented by the Oil-Workers’ Rights Protection Organization (OWRPO), whose bank accounts were frozen by the government for their involvement in the case. OWRPO approached us with a request to reach out to the company, who dropped the lawsuit the same day we sent out the request for a response. OWRPO’s Chairperson believes the lawsuit was dropped because of our intervention, and told us she is only able to continue her work because of our support.

Improved relations between textile firm and workers’ union in Honduras

Following allegations of death threats by Canadian apparel company Gildan against a SITRASTA union leader in Honduras, we invited Gildan to respond.

At the time SITRASTA was negotiating a collective contract, tensions were present due to the result of the latest electoral process, and Gildan were perceived as wanting to pressure SITRASTA to dissolve, replacing them with the pro-government CGT union. Gildan accused SITRASTA members of inciting violence and provoking social imbalance. Following our invitation, Gildan responded in detail and sent their response letter to the union as a symbol of peace and negotiation, resulting in the signing of the next collective contract. SITRASTA contacted the Intl. Union League for Brand Responsibility to find out who we were; the League subsequently contacted us with a request to collaborate with them on other cases where our company response mechanism could have a similar impact for workers’ organizations.
Compensation for garment workers after factory closure in the Philippines

Over 1,000 workers were made jobless in October 2016 following the closure of a Korean-owned garment factory in Cavite province, Philippines. Faremo International said one of its major clients had stopped issuing orders so they had no reason to continue production.

The Faremo workers’ union doubted this claim and suspected the shutdown was meant to suppress the recently formed union; they approached us for support. After three months of petitioning, during which time we had repeated contact with the factory’s parent company Hansoll, and major buyer Gap, the dismissed workers received a favourable settlement; separation pay and financial assistance, sewing machines for a livelihoods project for displaced employees, and a commitment to be rehired if the factory reopens.

Reclaimed access to essential services for village community in Kenya

A pineapple plantation managed by agricultural firm Kakuzi cut off the Mugumo-ini village community from the main road, through which villagers accessed essential services such as healthcare, education and food markets. The walk around was over 10km. Villagers had campaigned for an access road for many years with no success, and relations between company and community were strained. In 2016 a Kakuzi investor approached us to compel the company to respond to the villagers’ concerns. We worked with the community to document the human rights impacts and supported them in drafting a letter to Kakuzi to communicate these impacts effectively. The company responded positively and in 2017 built a new all-weather access road. Relations between the two parties have improved considerably ever since.

Engaged investors on privacy and security rights in Mexico

Reports uncovered that NSO Group’s spyware was being sold to the Mexican Government, who used the technology to harass lawyers and journalists.

Working with our Mexican allies, we took up the case with NSO Group, and with major prospective investors, including ClearSky and Blackstone. We initially received no response from them. We then went to nine pension funds invested in Blackstone. Two funds, CalPERS and ASRS, reported they had raised the issue with Blackstone. We then obtained replies from NSO Group and Blackstone, and a few weeks later Blackstone was reported to have withdrawn from discussions on buying a stake in NSO Group.

Promoted positive corporate action on climate change in the USA

We invited chemical company Eastman to respond to an expert blog by National Resources Defense Council raising concerns about its commitment to sustainability and emissions reduction, as a member of the Industrial Energy Consumers of America, which
expressed opposition to the Paris Agreement in a letter to President Trump. The company responded, and in their email said: "I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to respond to the recent NRDC blog post questioning Eastman’s commitment to sustainability in light of our IECA membership. Our response dated today is attached. You will see in our response that we have dropped our membership."

**Assisted human rights defender facing defamation charges in Honduras**

In 2017, hydroelectric company Desarrollos Energéticos (DESA) brought a defamation lawsuit against women’s rights defender, Suyapa Martínez, related to her public comments linking the assassination of Berta Cáceres with the company’s activities. Ms. Cáceres was a Honduran environmental activist who publicly opposed one of Central America’s biggest hydropower projects for its alleged abuse of indigenous rights. Local organizations raised that the lawsuit against Ms. Martínez was an attempt to silence rights defenders that had been demanding justice and a due diligence investigation into the killing of Cáceres.

We invited DESA to respond to these claims. The company’s response, that “to discredit DESA is to go against the motor of development”, was published in local papers, generating awareness of the case and the negative consequences of a company bringing defamation lawsuits against human rights defenders. The judge decided not to proceed with the lawsuit.

A local journalist, Dina Meza, highlighted the Resource Centre’s "great contribution in the case of Suyapa Martínez, especially in helping to get the lawsuit dismissed".

**Helped combat exploitation of refugee and migrant workers in Turkey’s apparel sector**

In Turkey, we have seen great progress among major fashion brands to enact positive changes to their policy and practice towards Syrian refugees in their supply chains. In 2017 we approached 37 brands on their actions to protect Syrian refugees, of which 31 responded, most with substantive answers. In the survey – our third since 2015 – almost twice as many brands could point to a specific policy, they had adopted to guide suppliers on employment of Syrian refugees and prohibit discrimination and exploitation.

Twice as many brands could demonstrate clear remediation and protection plans in the case of finding undocumented Syrian refugees in their supply chains; nine brands had a clear strategy to address undeclared subcontracting, other than dismissal of the worker (up from 1 in 2016); and nine brands declared they were conducting unannounced audits in Tiers 1 and 2 (up from 1 and 3 respectively in 2016). The substantive responses highlighted the impact of our, and others’, efforts to engage brands on the exploitation of Syrian refugees, demonstrating notable advances in their policy, practice, and performance, and proving the value of sustained engagement with brands over time.