

# Respecting Human Rights



imagination at work

Fordham University  
November 28, 2011

# What are Human Rights?

- ✓ Any basic right or freedom to which all human beings are entitled

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination."

*- Eleanor Roosevelt*

# GE's Human Rights Journey

2006-07

## GE Joins Business Leader Initiative on Human Rights to Understand Human Rights in Business Context

**BUSINESS LEADERS INITIATIVE ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

The member companies of the Business Leaders Initiative on Human Rights are proud to make available to their peers a series of free tools that offer practical ways to implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in a business context. Please visit [www.blhr.org](http://www.blhr.org)

2007

## Statement of Principles on Human Rights Support UDHR and Reflects Sphere of Influence

**GE Statement of Principles on Human Rights**

**Our Commitment**  
GE, as a business enterprise, promotes respect for fundamental human rights. We support the principles contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, remaining mindful that the Declaration is primarily addressed to nations. GE has joined with other companies to find practical ways of applying within the business community the broad principles established in the Declaration.

**Our Actions**  
GE endeavors to adhere to respect for fundamental human rights with the commitment to which our business operates. We do this in important part by leading by example, influencing our employees and business partners through actions consistent with policies contained in the Spirit and Letter of the Declaration, wherever we do business. GE agrees to:

**In Our Management Capacity**

- RESPECTING the human rights of our employees as established in the UN International Labour Organization Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, including non-discrimination, prohibition against child and forced labor, freedom of association and the right to engage in collective bargaining;
- PROVIDING security consistent with the intent of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, as well as on the basis of the countries in which we operate, ensuring security services for protection or defense purposes with instructions to use force only when necessary and to an extent proportioned to the threat;

**In Our Business Capacity**

- DEVELOPING and offering products, including those that meet human needs for power, water and medical care, with due regard for fundamental human rights and a sustainable environment;

**With Our Direct Business Partners**

- INCORPORATING appropriate principles of the Spirit & the Letter into contracts with suppliers, business partners and distributors;
- EXERCISING influence by key suppliers in emerging markets to environmental, health and safety standards, prohibitions against forced and child labor, and local wage and hour laws;
- EVALUATING human rights issues involving our direct business partners - particularly in emerging markets - and considering practical responses within the relevant context;
- ADMONISHING application of the ULO Declaration through engagement and collaboration;

**In the Community**

- SERVING as a positive influence in communities in which we operate, demonstrating by our actions our belief that human rights initiatives are auspicious;
- ASSISTING, as appropriate, the impact on affected local communities of major infrastructure project financing.

Mark Nordstrom  
November 2006

2008

## GE Joins UN Global Compact Focused on Human Rights Environment

November 24, 2008

Bob Kirmoon  
Secretary-General  
United Nations  
New York, NY 10017  
USA

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

Reference is made to the United Nations' Global Compact - a program which encourages corporate consideration of universally-accepted principles to harmonize the role of business and society. As we understand it, the Global Compact recognizes that, because of the wealth that business creates, corporations are part of the solution to conflict resolution, security, a decent standard of living and improved quality of life.

I am pleased to confirm that General Electric Company supports the ten principles of the Global Compact with respect to human rights, labor standards, protection of the environment, and anti-corruption. We hereby reiterate our intent to support and advance these principles within our company and entities controlled by it. We undertake to make a clear statement of our support of the Global Compact in our annual report or other public documents such as our Citizenship Report.

It is our understanding that the Global Compact reflects shared values and principles between the United Nations and business such as our company, but that the Global Compact is not a grading or enforcement mechanism nor does it involve any concepts of profit or technology transfers. However, our participation in the Global Compact does not limit our freedom, or permit us by law, to oppose public or private sector activities which we do not believe are in the best interests of our company. We note that the general intentions behind the Global Compact may be implemented differently in different countries, in keeping with local laws and customs.

Please find enclosed some general information regarding our company, as well as the contact person responsible for contacts with the UN Office of the Global Compact.

Sincerely yours,

2009

## Human Rights Implementing Procedures Issued

**Nordstrom, Mark (GE, Corporate)**

**From:** Denstrom, Mark (GE, Corporate)  
**Sent:** Monday, March 16, 2009 4:24 PM  
**To:** @CORP Legal, CCL, Lawyers, @CORP International Executives, @CORP Sourcing Leaders, @CORP private compliance leaders  
**Subject:** Human Rights, implementing Procedures - FINAL 12-30-08.doc; Implementing Procedures - Human Rights.pdf

**Attachments:** Human Rights, implementing Procedures - FINAL 12-30-08.doc; Implementing Procedures - Human Rights.pdf

All,

I am writing to announce the adoption of the implementing procedures applicable to the Company's Statement of Principles on Human Rights.

As our business continues to grow globally, we also will continue to be confronted with human rights issues that warrant thoughtful scrutiny and attention. The Spirit and Letter has long contained commitments to protecting human rights in a number of its policies such as those dealing with employment and environmental, health and safety. In 2007, we made our commitment to protecting human rights more explicit in our Citizenship Report in a Statement of Principles on Human Rights. It succinctly describes our basic commitment:

*GE, as a business enterprise, promotes the advancement of fundamental human rights. We support the principles contained in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, mindful that it is primarily addressed to nations but understanding that business has an important role to play. GE has joined with other companies to find practical ways of applying within the business community the broad principles established in the Declaration.*

Our core objective is to recognize human rights risks and implement appropriate procedures to address and mitigate those risks. These Implementing Procedures on Human Rights provide the framework to carry out this task.

The major elements of the Procedures are the following:

- The Vice-President of Corporate Citizenship will be the policy owner for the Statement of Principles on Human Rights.
- The Compliance Review Boards at each of the five businesses will have overall responsibility, as with other compliance issues, for implementing these Procedures within each business.
- The Procedures define roles for Security, National Executives, Regional Boards and Compliance Leaders.
- Human Rights issues are to be evaluated in the Session D process.

If you have any questions about the Procedures, please contact Mark Nordstrom in GE Corporate Legal (8\* 220-2384).

Many thanks for your help in implementing this new and important procedure.

Mark

## 2010 Developments:

- ✓ Member of Global Business Initiative on HR
  - Close working relationship with John Ruggie, Special Rep of UN Secy General on Human Rights in

### Business - "Protect"/"Respect"/"Remedy"

- ✓ MyLearning Human Rights Training rolled out to 6,000 Managers
- ✓ Current Issue: Conflict Minerals – Preparing to regulations due next year
- ✓ Session D: For first time include an inquiry into Human Rights and activities of Human Rights Champions at each business

# GE Statement of Principles on Human Rights

## Our Commitment

GE, as a business enterprise, promotes respect for fundamental human rights. We support the principles contained in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, remaining mindful that the Declaration is primarily addressed to nations. GE has joined with other companies to find practical ways of applying within the business community the broad principles established in the Declaration.

## Our Actions

GE endeavors to advance respect for fundamental human rights within the communities in which our businesses operate. We do this in important part by leading by example - influencing our employees and business partners through actions consistent with policies contained in the Spirit & Letter. Wherever we do business, GE aspires to:

### ✓ In Our Management Capacity

- ✓ RESPECTING the human rights of our employees as established in the ILO's (International Labour Organization) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, including non-discrimination, prohibitions against child and forced labor, freedom of association and the right to engage in collective bargaining.
- ✓ PROVIDING security consistent with the intent of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, as well as the laws of the countries in which we operate, retaining security services for preventative or defensive purposes with instructions to use force only when necessary and to an extent proportional to the threat.

### ✓ In Our Business Capacity

- ✓ DEVELOPING and offering products, including those that meet human needs for power, water and medical care, with due regard for fundamental human rights and a sustainable environment.

### ✓ With Our Direct Business Partners

- ✓ INCORPORATING appropriate principles of *The Spirit & The Letter* into contracts with suppliers, business partners and distributors.
  - ✓ MONITORING adherence by key suppliers in emerging markets to environmental, health and safety standards, prohibitions against forced and child labor, and local wage and hour laws.
  - ✓ EVALUATING human rights issues involving our direct business partners – particularly in emerging markets – and considering practical responses within the relevant context.
  - ✓ ADVANCING application of the ILO Declaration through engagement and collaboration.
- ### ✓ In the Community
- ✓ SERVING as a positive influence in communities in which we operate, demonstrating by our actions our belief that human rights violations are unacceptable.
  - ✓ ASSESSING, as appropriate, the impact on affected local communities of major infrastructure project financing.

# IMPLEMENTING PROCEDURES: HUMAN RIGHTS

**Responsibilities** – utilizing existing GE operating cycles...

## Vice President of Corporate Citizenship

- ✓ Corporate programs
- ✓ Directing business-based Compliance Review Boards

## Business-based Compliance Review Boards

- ✓ Evaluate transactions for risk
- ✓ Respond to HR violations
- ✓ Monitor business relationship with partners
- ✓ Serve as positive influence in support of HR
- ✓ Create awareness with employees
- ✓ Evaluate human rights in Sessions D and E
- ✓ Upstream due diligence re large infrastructure projects
- ✓ Apply Equator Principles prior to infrastructure financing
- ✓ Apply Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights
- ✓ Highlighting due diligence re minority joint ventures

## National Executives

- ✓ Work through country or Regional Boards to flag human rights issues

## Compliance Leaders – In the context of Session D...

- ✓ Risk assessment & abatement
- ✓ Training and communication
- ✓ Issue reporting and resolution

## Employees

- ✓ “Eyes always open” reporting
- ✓ “Know Your Customer”

# UN / Ruggie Framework

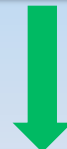
## UN Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights

State duty to protect Human Rights  
(Laws, Regulation & Enforcement)

GE →

Business Entities' responsibility to respect Human Rights  
(Due Diligence & Reporting)

Access to remedies for Human Rights violations



UN / OECD / EU policy frameworks / US Federal & State laws

“Soft Law” of Human Rights becoming viscous

# Benefits to GE of Corporate Social Responsibility

- ✓ Reduced financial and reputational risk
- ✓ Reduced risk from human rights litigation
- ✓ Improved stakeholder relations – NGOs/SRI
- ✓ More secure license to operate: Promote Rule to Law
- ✓ Consistent with commercial messaging: Ecomagination, Healthymagination
- ✓ Solving the world's biggest problems: Water, Energy, Healthcare



# Guangdong EHS Academy

- ✓ Multi-company initiative, launched by the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC)
- ✓ Recently expanded to Jiangsu
- ✓ Leverages expertise of companies, government, and ISC
- ✓ Workshops include EHS, management systems, climate change, the business case for EHS
- ✓ In 2010, about 100 Chinese suppliers trained on energy efficiency and greenhouse gas reductions





# UN Global Compact Human Rights & Business Dilemmas Forum



Access to Water

Child Labor

Community Relocation

Corruption

Misuse

Ethnic Minorities

Forced Labor

Freedom of Religion

Freedom of Speech

Health & Safety

HIV/AIDs

Housing

Human Trafficking

Living Wage

Migrant Workers

Privacy

Product

Security Forces

Stabilization Clauses

**Dilemma: Gender Equality**

Freedom of Association

Indigenous Peoples

Working Hours

“What should a company do when its internal policies prohibit gender discrimination and promote gender equality, yet local cultural, legal or business norms permit and promote discrimination against women within some of the countries where it operates?”



imagination at work

**“The destiny of human rights is in the hands of all of our citizens in all of our communities.”**

***-Eleanor Roosevelt.***

