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UN FORUM SERIES – Tracking progress in business and human rights: An introduction

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The United Nations Working Group on business and human rights (UNWG) dedicated its [2015 report to the UN General Assembly](#) to the issue of measuring the uptake and implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs).

The UNWG explained its decision in the following terms:

Businesses may have an adverse impact on every human right, in any country in the world. Yet there is no comprehensive data on the nature, scale or extent of that impact. Likewise, there is no comprehensive data on the efforts made by States and companies to prevent and remedy business-related harm. The UNWG has thus identified measurement as a priority for its mandate.

Following up to such prioritization, “[tracking progress](#)” is one of the two key themes of the fourth UN Annual Forum on Business and Human Rights (16-18 November 2015).

At Measuring Business & Human Rights (MB&HR), we are excited that discussions on how to assess and track implementation of the UNGPs have taken centre stage in the business and human rights agenda. As we have repeatedly argued, “translating” international standards into indicators and metrics can be a powerful tool to enhance business compliance, but also a dangerous mechanism to hide political decisions behind technical language and obscure procedures (thus disempowering vulnerable communities and affected individuals).

An exhaustive discussion on the topic is way overdue.

This is why, four weeks in advance of the the UN Annual Forum, we are glad to launch a “series” of blogposts whose objective is to trigger innovative thinking on how “measuring business and human rights” should be performed.

In particular, we have asked contributors (representing different stakeholders, from companies to governments, from civil society organizations to measurement experts) to address the following questions:

1. How can we measure progress in the implementation of the UNGPs? What are the most daunting challenges and/or the most promising solutions?
2. Do you see progress in the implementation of the UNGPs? If so (or if not), what is the evidence in support of your argument?

We hope that the arguments offered by contributors will feed into the real conversations taking place next month in Geneva. At the UN Annual Forum, the UNWG will lead two sessions dedicated to assessing and tracking implementation of the UNGPs. We have participated in the organization of these sessions, together with the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, the Danish Institute for Human Rights, the Institute for Human Rights and Business, Shift, the University of Denver, and the US Council for International Business.

You can find more information about the sessions here below:

- [Measuring States' implementation of the Guiding Principles](#), 16 November, 11.40AM-1PM, Room XX.
- [Measuring businesses' implementation of the Guiding Principles](#), 17 November, 3PM-4.20PM, Room XXIII.

If you are interested in contributing to the series, please send an email to Damiano de Felice, ddefelice@atmindex.org.

For a general introduction to the topic of measuring business and human rights, you can read this [peer-reviewed article](#) published in *Human Rights Quarterly*.

Charline, Damiano and Irene

UPDATE: We are glad to announce that, given the high number of submissions, the blog series will continue for a few weeks after the UN Forum.

The UN FORUM SERIES:

- Arnaud Poitevin. “Whistleblowing: A powerful tool to monitor human rights compliance.” 20 October 2015. ([read](#))
- Martijn Scheltema. “How does progress look like in business and human rights?” 21 October 2015. ([read](#))
- Fiona David. “Modern Slavery and Measuring the Sustainable Development Goals.” 22 October 2015. ([read](#))
- Linda Kromjong. “The Guiding Principles have been a game changer.” 23 October 2015. ([read](#))
- Brian Ganson. “Is dialogue working? We need more dialogue to find out.” 26 October 2015. ([read](#))
- Greg Asbed. “Measuring achieves little without market-based enforcement and worker participation.” 27 October 2015. ([read](#))
- Paul Middelkoop. “Radical Transparency, or how to use public data for large scale Social-Impact Assessments.” 28 October 2015. ([read](#))
- Ryan Brightwell. “What should banks do to take human rights seriously?” 29 October 2015. ([read](#))
- Vicky Bowman. “Encouraging transparency in Myanmar: Pwint Thit Sa.” 30 October 2015. ([read](#))
- Steve Gibbons. “Human rights reporting: 2016 could be a pivotal year.” 2 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Margaret Jungk. “Implementing the Guiding Principles: The challenge of measurement.” 3 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Sara Seck. “Measuring Progress: Lawyers and Climate Change.” 4 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Kate Anderson. “We have SDGs now, but how do we measure them?” 5 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Caio Borges. “Progress depends on clarifying responsibilities.” 6 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Michael A. Santoro. “Outside-In and Inside-Out Human Rights Measurement Tools: How Numbers Can Become the Lingua Franca of Business and Human Rights.” 6 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Sudeep Chakravarti. “A new benchmark for human rights.” 7 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Michelle Staggs Kelsall. “A cartographer’s guide to measurement: mapping where we are, determining where we want to be and getting into the messy in-roads of legislation.” 9 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Dorothee Baumann-Pauly. “Creating industry-specific standards to operationalize the responsibility to respect.” 9 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Adam Smith-Anthony and Laura Edwards. “Where does human rights fit within business?” 10 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Aldo Caliarì. “Are infrastructure investors exempt from human rights duties? G20 surely thinks so...” 10 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Lorenzo Cotula. “Business and Human Rights in Investment Treaties. What Progress?” 11 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Wendy Betts. “Monitoring Compliance with the UN Guiding Principles in Conflict Zones.” 11 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Sanyu Awori and Dorathy Stanislaus Benjamin. “Advancing women’s human rights: This is progress in business and human rights.” 12 November 2015 ([read](#))
- Alejandro González. “Meaningful rights-holders engagement is key for human rights impact assessments.” 12 November 2015 ([read](#))
- Margaret Jungk, Mauricio Lazala and Mark Hodge. “Three is the magic number.” 12 November 2015 ([read](#))
- Hiroshi Ishida. “Business and human rights progress in the Japanese context.” 13 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Lara Blecher. “The UK Local Government Pension Scheme: Can pooled and passive funds adequately address human rights?” 13 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Allon Bar. “How do technology companies integrate freedom of expression and privacy rights?” 13 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Teresa Fogelberg. “Linking the UN Guiding Principles to global reporting practice: Proof of increasing human rights reporting.” 19 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Amelia Evans and Stephen Winstanley. “Asking the basic questions: Are voluntary standard-setting initiatives protecting human rights?” 20 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Luke Wilde. “Think before you measure!” 23 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Patrick Geary. “Time for the UNGPs to Grow Up? Tracking Children’s Rights in National Action Plans on Business & Human Rights.” 23 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Anna Bulzomi. “Human rights due diligence is redefining investment opportunities in frontier markets.” 24 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Verónica Aranzazu Zubía Pinto. “Measuring progress through National Action Plans and sustainability reports.” 25 November 2015. ([read](#))
- Katie Redford. “Rhetoric of corporate responsibility is not enough: Corporations must walk the walk, not just talk the talk.” 30 November 2015. ([read](#))
- David Sullivan. “Competition, Collaboration, and Corporate Accountability Rankings.” 1 December 2015. ([read](#))

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