



Health, Environment, Livelihoods

Everyone has the right to life, health, an adequate standard of living, and the right to own property.¹ An ongoing human rights concern associated with business activities is the potential for adverse environmental or health effects that may infringe on the human rights of workers or stakeholders. Companies should continue ongoing due diligence activities in this regard and ensure that new or previously identified issues are not ignored because of COVID-19.¹

Measures that protect the rights of workers:

- ✓ Communicate and enforce clear, transparent, consistent human rights policies about the management of adverse impacts within the company and to contractors and suppliers.
- ✓ Expand existing company housing to respect physical distancing and other ways to prevent transmission of the virus.
- ✓ Undertake due diligence to identify and mitigate adverse environmental and health impacts, including emotional and psychological stress and anxiety due to the measures that limit mobility and choice, associated with business activities.
- ✓ Conduct regular audits/inspections and follow-up on findings (e.g. labour standards and occupational safety), including appropriate information disclosure.
- ✓ Ensure workers and stakeholders are engaged and informed about their rights and relevant risks and impacts.
- ✓ Ensure processes are in place for workers and stakeholders to communicate COVID-19 concerns in a safe and confidential space and to, including concerns about the measures that violate human rights, and access effective and appropriate remedy in the event that adverse impacts arise.
- ✓ Track the effectiveness of responses to these communicated concerns.

Measures that violate the rights of workers:

- ✗ Cancel or postpone regular monitoring activities, audits/inspections, or responses to adverse impacts (e.g. accidents, spills) due to COVID-19, including disclosing appropriate information.
- ✗ Fail to provide company housing for migrant workers that respects local requirements for physical distancing.
- ✗ Disrupt access to resources that individuals rely on for subsistence (e.g. water, land) through company consumption of that resource, contamination, damage, displacement, etc., or by restricting or limiting access due to COVID-19 transmission concerns about spreading the virus
- ✗ Cause or contribute to contracting COVID-19 (e.g. through transmission, exposure, etc.)
- ✗ Suppress or ignore legitimate concerns raised regarding COVID-19 (e.g. labour standards and occupational safety).
- ✗ Deny compensation for damages caused.

¹ This human right is protected under a number of international treaties including the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) and [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#).

² Examples for the extractives sector documented in a report by Earthworks. (2020). [Voices from the Ground: How the Global Mining Industry is Profiting from the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). www.business-humanrights.org/en/report-argues-mining-industry-is-profiting-from-COVID-19-while-putting-workers-communities-defenders-at-risk-including-co-responses