

Human rights due diligence services

Ergon has many years' experience partnering with clients to develop and implement human rights strategies. As the weight of both legislation and stakeholder expectations increases, our services assist with strategic decision-making, regulatory compliance, supply chain due diligence and human rights reporting.

Ergon works with leading companies from all sectors including: retail, FMCG, manufacturing, hospitality, finance, extractive and agriculture. All our work is tailored to providing practical, client-centred outputs.



Ergon



Human rights diagnostic

The scope of potential human rights risks or impacts can seem daunting for any organisation. We offer structured support to help understand the scale and location of risks. At each stage we work collaboratively with clients to build understanding and capacity.

Mapping risks: In-house tools covering more than 140 countries that identify and rank where your key human rights risks are located both geographically and within business segments.

Prioritising risks: Structured, data-driven process to help you identify the most salient risks for priority attention.

Country profiles: Detailed Country Risk Profiles covering labour rights and broader human rights risks. These provide in-depth legal commentary, gap analysis and risk descriptions against common international benchmarks.

Understanding impacts: Human rights impact assessments (HRIAs) both for site-specific projects and across complete corporate operations. These utilise our bespoke analytical methodology to identify and score the full range of impacts.



Benchmarking analytics

Investors and NGOs are increasingly comparing and ranking business performance on aspects of human rights.

Benchmarking assessment: Our benchmarking service tells you where you stand in relation to regulatory compliance and compared to various indices, enabling you to improve processes and reporting. Among others, we benchmark against: Modern Slavery Act, Corporate Human Rights Benchmark, Know the Chain, DJSI.



Expert consulting

Business structures and levels of knowledge about risk vary between businesses. We believe a customised, focused approach is key to mitigating risk.

Policy review: Advice on developing stand-alone human rights policies, or reviewing existing human rights-related policy commitments against international standards or industry best practice.

Issue-specific support: Expert analysis and clear advice focused on particular human rights issues such as complex local situations, endemic risks or national legal requirements.

Internal capacity-building: Help in building your internal knowledge base through workshops, training and engagement with key actors within the business.

Action planning: Support for developing practical, concrete action plans with timelines and KPIs that address your key risks and enable the most efficient use of resources.



Human rights reporting

Enhanced reporting is demanded within businesses, by external stakeholders and increasingly by regulators.

Regulatory developments: Advice on emerging regulatory reporting regimes across jurisdictions, and how different requirements may be addressed most effectively.

Review & benchmarking: Assistance with planning reports, gathering appropriate information, structuring content and benchmarking against comparators, for both focused modern slavery statements and company-wide human rights reports.



Grievance and remedy

Providing communities and other stakeholders with the opportunity to raise grievances is a challenging component of human rights programmes.

Design: Design, testing and evaluating community and worker grievance mechanisms, based on our unique experience of operational and sectoral grievance processes.

Implementation: Our team is experienced in managing often complex and difficult grievances, through mediation and investigation.



Case study: UK department store - global human rights risk assessment on four raw materials

A major UK department store requested a detailed human rights risk assessment on four raw materials used in multiple products – leather, cotton, timber and feather & down - that had been identified during a previous materiality assessment. Traceability and supply chain visibility varied between the materials with feather and down traceable to primary producers but the other materials generally traceable only to the manufacturing or processing tier.

We applied a multi-step risk assessment process. First, we classified the value chain for each material into identifiable stages of raw material cultivation, processing and manufacture, and identified the actual economic activities being carried out at each stage. Second, we drew up a short-list of relevant human rights potentially impacted by each economic activity. Next, for each relevant rights area and using known sourcing countries and likely sourcing countries (totaling more than 70 countries), we applied a combination of our in-house risk indices and bespoke desk research, to determine a risk score for each impacted right and country. Finally we overlaid a saliency analysis based on attribution, duration of impact and magnitude.

The resulting risk ranking showed the areas of highest risk by material, process and impacted rights. We tested this, together with a skeleton action plan, in a workshop with the client's in-house team and expert external stakeholders. These results provided a clear grounding for internal discussion of due diligence on those priorities, and fed into the company's ongoing sustainable and responsible sourcing strategies.



Case study: European chemical company - human rights risk assessment and systems review

Building on their new human rights policy, a major European chemicals manufacturer was seeking to build a better understanding of their key human rights risks and relevant management systems, including filling any gaps in their current approach, building internal awareness, and developing mitigation strategies for priority human rights risks.

We developed a bespoke tool enabling the client to identify the activities that may be higher risk in terms of human rights impacts across their manufacturing, logistics and extractive operations in more than 40 countries. The tool built upon a series of binary questions on risk factors relating to country context, workforce composition, community impacts and degree of company control to produce an overall risk score, thereby facilitating identification of areas where more focused human rights due diligence may be needed. A separate assessment was carried out for raw materials supply chains, scoring risks across a variety of human rights issues, procurement markets and sourcing categories. As part of this process, we also benchmarked our client's approach against international criteria, advising on further areas for improvement.

As a result of our work, the group was able to strengthen their human rights due diligence and risk management processes, identify key areas for action as well as human rights issues that required a more in-depth analysis. Since our approach centred around the engagement with various functions within the business, another key outcome was increased awareness of internal stakeholders, as well as broad buy-in into the client's developing human rights due diligence approach.

