

5. Create positive social impact with buildings and for communities

5.1 Protect human rights relating to health through the building and construction lifecycle

State of health

WorldGBC carried out analysis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹ undertaken for the buildings and construction industry identifies the following areas of fundamental importance for maintaining human rights within the building lifecycle:

- Worker rights and freedoms, mitigation of risks of forced labour and modern slavery
- Land and housing security and property ownership
- Free choice and favourable, secure working conditions with fair remuneration
- Gender equality, including equality in pay
- Right to adequate housing, and decent standard of living
- Free participation in the cultural life of community, and duties to the community for all

The United Nations '*Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*² outlines the state's duty to protect human rights and the responsibility of corporate enterprise to respect human rights. Companies in the built environment sector should undertake human rights due diligence measures to ensure their operations respect human rights and do not contribute to human rights abuses³.

With regard to built environment practitioners, guidance around human rights is centred around three themes:

- Employment rights and quality for construction workers and those in supply chain (specific physical and mental health risks presented in detail in Principle 5.2)
- Rights and quality for building occupant – encompassing standards and adequacy of building design and consequential standard of living, including physical health and wellbeing factors, and engagement and duties within and to community
- Rights of local communities (see Principle 5.3)

Employment rights and quality for supply chain and construction workers:

It has long been recognised that there is, within the built environment industry, a considerable variation of practices and standards relating to social sustainability and maintaining human rights standards. This includes those manufacturing raw materials, (often in dangerous, exploitative and highly polluting environments), to those working on construction sites. Within the building and construction industry, reports of lack of diversity in the workforce, and minimal representation of those from marginalised communities are common⁴. In many countries, a high proportion of construction workers are migrant workers, who are at heightened risk of exploitation.

Rights and quality for building occupant:

Quality standards should be met for all building types, however the right to adequate housing is a particular social consideration with direct impact on occupant health and wellbeing. The right to adequate housing includes criteria such as security of tenure, affordability, habitability and accessibility, as defined fully by UN Habitat⁵.

Outcomes

The ethical management of human rights relating to the construction industry and built environment should be considered and enhanced at each stage of the building lifecycle. Strategies should be incorporated by all relevant stakeholders in value chain, with emphasis on both employment rights and quality for supply chain and construction workers, and rights and quality of building for occupant.

Strategies across the life cycle

Strategies related to employment rights and quality for supply chain and construction workers and rights and quality for occupant are presented in stages across the lifecycle as considerations for designers, planners and policy makers:

Design:

- Social and demographic equity should be sought amongst design team, construction workers and those involved across the lifecycle of the building or development (repeat across all stages)
- Implementation of standards meeting rights and quality standards for building occupant – encompassing adequacy of building design and consequential standard of living, including the universal Right to Adequate Housing
- Inclusion of human rights and labour provisions in tendering for project and supplier contracts

Construction:

- When migrant workforces are employed, ensure that worker accommodation is adequate
- Thorough human rights due diligence process on supply chain risks, also termed Human Rights Impact Assessment and Supply Chain Mapping (covering materials, suppliers, contractors, transportation).
 - Human rights due diligence involves four steps: assessing actual and potential human rights impacts (considering all ways a company is or could be involved) integrating and acting on the findings, tracking responses, and communicating about how impacts are addressed
 - A company should seek to obtain as complete a picture as possible of its suppliers as part of the impact assessment. Where it is infeasible to conduct due diligence across the entire supply chain, companies should prioritize first the areas of the supply chain where the risks of adverse human rights impacts are most significant⁶
- Mandatory requirements of good practice within supply chain: awareness sessions and site maintenance and inspections, and adherence to ILO fundamental conventions⁷
 - These cover human rights topics including child and forced labour, freedom of association, discrimination and equal pay

Operation:

- Social and demographic equity of all suppliers and maintenance
- Fair management of Private Owned Public Space (POPS)

Benchmarks

- UN 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework within 'Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights':
https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf
- UN Global Compact: *Navigating the Future of Business and Human Rights: Good Practice Examples* <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/library/5727>
- UN Global Compact Network Report: *Doing Business with Respect for Human Rights*:
www.unglobalcompact.org/library/4911
- UN [Right to Adequate Housing Toolkit](#)

More information

- Building Green Spotlight Report: Re-forming the Building Industry: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: <https://www.buildinggreen.com/spotlight/inclusion>
- BREEAM International New Construction Standard 'Mat 03 Responsible construction practices' and 'Mat 03 Responsible sourcing of construction products':
<https://www.breeam.com/discover/technical-standards/>

- BRE Group BES 6001 Framework Standard for Responsible Sourcing and BES 6002 Ethical Labour Sourcing Standard: <https://www.bregroup.com/services/standards/>
- Cradle to Cradle Certified™ Products Program (Social Fairness) <https://www.c2ccertified.org/>
- Greater London Authority, 2020 'The Construction Protocol: How the GLAA and the construction industry work together' <https://www.gla.gov.uk/media/5433/construction-protocol-v08-as-at-300120.pdf>
- Green Building Council of Australia Green Star - Design & As Built 'Management': <https://new.gbca.org.au/green-star/rating-system/design-and-built/>
- Green Building Council of Australia Green Star – Communities 'Governance': <https://new.gbca.org.au/green-star/rating-system/communities/>
- Green Building Council of South Africa Green Star Rating Tool – Socio-Economic Category <https://gbcsa.org.za/certify/green-star-sa/socio-economic-category-pilot/>
- IHRB, 2019: "Dignity by Design: Human Rights and the Built Environment Lifecycle"
- IHRB Briefing 'Migrant Worker Accommodation' https://www.ihrb.org/uploads/briefings/IHRB_Briefing_-_Migrant_Worker_Accommodation_-_Feb_2019.pdf
- Supply Chain Sustainability School, 2020, People Matter Charter: <https://www.supplychainschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/People-Matter-Charter-Final-Jan2020.pdf>
- UN Global Compact. 'A structured process to prioritize supply chain human rights risks' https://d306pr3pise04h.cloudfront.net/docs/issues_doc%2Fhuman_rights%2FHuman_Rights_Working_Group%2FSupply_Chain_GPN.pdf
- UN Global Compact: Business It's Time to Act: Decent Work, Modern Slavery, and Child Labour: <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/library/5616>
- UN Global Compact: Decent Work Toolkit: https://sustainableprocurement.unglobalcompact.org/Responsible_Steel
- UN Global Compact: Guide on How to Develop a Human Rights Policy - www.unglobalcompact.org/library/22
- United Nations. 1948. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>



**BETTER PLACES
FOR PEOPLE**

5.2 Commit to protecting health and wellbeing of people in the construction industry



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State of health

The people involved in a building most extensively across its lifecycle are those working in and around the building during the construction (and deconstruction) phase(s), and those living and working in and around the building once operational. However, the construction workforce is often overlooked regarding the impact of the building and surroundings on their mental and physical health and wellbeing.

The construction industry employs approximately 7% of the global work force and it is predicted to account for approximately 13% of GDP by 2020⁸. It is a well-known issue within the industry that business operation includes a broad spectrum of practices and standards relating both to social sustainability and the maintenance of human rights standards. We aspire to an industry evolution centred around responsible construction practices, which are managed in an environmentally and socially considerate, responsible, and accountable manner.⁹

Physical and mental health and wellbeing of construction workers is a topic about which there is growing awareness worldwide. Research reveals that construction workers have a high risk of developing diseases from a number of health issues. In the United Kingdom, construction has the largest burden of occupational cancer amongst the industrial sectors. It accounts for over 40% of occupational cancer deaths and cancer registrations¹⁰. Exposure to hazardous substances, such as asbestos or silica dust, is a recognised cause of the heightened risk of lung and other cancers, as well as broader respiratory and cardiovascular health issues¹¹.

In addition to physical health, mental wellbeing is now recognised as a major risk for construction workers. The suicide rate for male labourers is three times higher than the average male suicide rate for the UK¹², and in Australia a construction worker commits suicide every second day, on average¹³. Some 20% of all cases of ill health in the sector are due to work-related stress, depression and anxiety, and as a consequence, over 400,000 working days are lost each year¹⁴.

Additionally, construction is a heavy manual industry where working into later life can be a challenge¹⁵. A sustainable building and construction industry must be supportive of our ageing global population, creating safe and healthy work environments ensuring that practitioners are offered both professional security and personal safety.

Outcome

- Health-focused construction principles implemented and practices standardised, particularly minimising worker exposure to hazardous materials, chemicals and carcinogenic substances

Strategies across the life cycle

Construction:

- Adherence to specific responsible construction practices and programmes, such as Considerate Constructors Scheme
- Adherence to ILO standards on worker rights, covering freedom of association, elimination of forced labour and child labour, and non-discrimination
- Adherence to the “employer pays” principle to ensure that workers do not have to pay recruitment fees
- Implementation of specific health and safety practices to eliminate worker exposure to hazardous materials, chemicals and carcinogenic substances
- Increase employee and staff awareness of occupational health risks and mitigation
- Extension of Employee Assistance Programmes, occupational health checks and other initiatives to suppliers/smaller contractors

- Education programmes for construction workers, both in improving literacy skills (targeting construction workers in certain geographies who have worked since childhood), and also in construction health and safety (including dangers of the industry, the benefits of implementing good industrial practices and environmentally responsible practices)
 - Education programs should be continuous, to ensure awareness of evolving low or zero carbon technologies and sustainability practices
- Main contractors should undertake effective due diligence on any agency they engage with, and have a duty of care to ensure that workers working via third parties are employed according to international standards, are not subject to exploitation and are protected in the workplace including their health and safety and mental health wellbeing

Benchmarks

- Building Responsibly [worker welfare principles](#)
- HSE - Cancer and Construction: [Key points and recommendation reports](#)
- [ILO Fundamental Principles](#)
- [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#)

More information

- Beam Plus New Buildings V2.0 'Integrated Design and Construction Management': https://www.hkgbc.org.hk/eng/beam-plus/file/BEAMPlus_New_Buildings_v2_0.pdf
- Beam Plus Neighbourhood V1.0 'Community Aspects': <https://www.beamsociety.org.hk/files/Manual/BEAMPlusNDManualWithCorrigendumNo1.pdf>
- Cradle to Cradle Certified™ Products Program (Material Health) <https://www.c2ccertified.org/>
- Green Building Council of Australia Green Star - Design & As Built 'Management': see Social Construction credits <https://new.gbca.org.au/green-star/rating-system/design-and-built/>
- Green Building Council of Australia Green Star – Communities 'Governance': <https://new.gbca.org.au/green-star/rating-system/communities/>
- Green Building Council of South Africa Green Star Rating Tool – Socio-Economic Category <https://gbcsoa.org.za/certify/green-star-sa/socio-economic-category-pilot/>
- IGBC 'Health and Wellbeing Rating: Service to Society' <https://igbc.in/igbc/redirectHtml.htm?redVal=showHealthWellBiengnosign#Resources>
- IHRB 'Responsible Recruitment Gateway' <https://www.ihrb.org/employerpays/>

5.3 Mitigate negative social impacts and protect social equity in community

Health and wellbeing in the built environment has for too long focused primarily on the occupants of a building. Although the built environment has a remarkable impact on the health, wellbeing, productivity, and other factors relating to an occupant, its wider and less tangible impacts on those who live in the surrounding area must also be considered.

There can be a benefit to a local economy and associated social impacts from operational buildings and construction. This may include a positive multiplier effect to local business, enhancement of neighbourhoods (gentrification), provision of employment and development of community facilities. However, negative social impact is often created or overlooked through development, and can include community segregation, loss of culture and even an increase in crime. During construction, retrofit or deconstruction phases, the physical issues created by development – such as air, noise, light pollution – must also be considered and mitigated.

Social value, justice and fairness

“Social justice may be broadly understood as the fair and compassionate distribution of the fruits of economic growth... but it is also essential to ensure that growth is sustainable, that the integrity of the natural environment is respected, that the use of non-renewable resources are rationalized, and that future generations are able to enjoy a beautiful and hospitable earth” – United Nations, Social Justice in an Open World.¹⁶

The inequality in the distribution of income and quality of life affects countries of all levels of wealth and development. Our built environments – our societies, communities and cities – are where inequality in health, wellbeing and quality of life can be most apparent. The trend of urbanisation, with greater than two-thirds of people expected to live in cities by 2050, is expected to add an additional 2.5 billion people to the existing urban populations¹⁷. Larger urban populations will increase pressure on existing systems on infrastructure, including provision of adequate housing and services, access to resources and societal, system and environmental resilience. In societies struggling with population pressures, the health, wellbeing and quality of life of marginalised communities or vulnerable groups must be recognised as a risk. The buildings and infrastructure of our cities can contribute to these problems or they can provide solutions¹⁸.

Social resilience:

Social equity and fairness must extend to ensuring equality in being resilient to challenges for all people. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the particular difficulties and disadvantaged outcomes the built environment can trigger or enhance. Some of the many examples worldwide include the disproportionate death tolls in informal housing settlements, such as favelas in Brazil¹⁹, the racial disparity in death toll that are closely linked to social determinants of health²⁰, and limited access to healthcare facilities which is considered a contributory factor to heightened death tolls of indigenous people and other marginalised communities²¹.

Outcomes

- The health and wellbeing of all people impacted by a building in operation should be considered, and consciously enhanced where possible; incorporating environmental, social and economic indicators of health. The creation of positive social impact should be universal, with principles of equity and fairness underpinning design and operational decisions that would impact local community. Resilience-focused design and master-planning of cities, communities and built environment should also be sought.

Strategies across the life cycle

Design:

- Ensure non-discrimination

- Consider physical and health impacts on the local area, with active input from the local community: take steps to mitigate harm, and expand positive impacts such as the provision of resources and infrastructure for the local community, safety and security of surroundings, design for a healthy community such as expanding sidewalks and improving walkability
- Plan for community participation accounting for demographics of neighbouring area; include grounding the project in a strong understanding of local social and economic context and ensure meaningful participation of the local community from the outset, to mitigate risks of harm and to identify positive outcomes
- Community engagement programmes ensuring access to information for local community members throughout the course of the project, including public engagement at phase one design, Community Impact Assessment, Social Value Impact Assessments or equivalents

Construction:

- Ensure non-discrimination
- Mitigation of air pollution, noise pollution, traffic, congestion, waste and other pollutions created on site

Operation:

- Ensure non-discrimination
- Implementation of organisational level strategies to support local people and economy, e.g. no on-site food provision to encourage expenditure in local business, supporting community causes (e.g. charities, schools, hospitals, investment in public transport facilities) demonstrated through Corporate Social Impact Reporting

Benchmarks

- UKGBC, [Social Value in New Development](#)
- The National TOMS Framework – the [Social Value Portal](#)
- Supply Chain Sustainability School, '[Social Value and Design of the Built Environment](#)'
- UKGBC '[Delivering Social Value Measurement](#)'

More Information

- Beam Plus New Buildings V2.0 'Sustainable Site, Integrated Design and Construction Management': https://www.hkgbc.org/hk/eng/beam-plus/file/BEAMPlus_New_Buildings_v2_0.pdf
- BREEAM Certification 2012, 'Communities' section: https://www.breeam.com/communitiesmanual/content/resources/otherformats/output/bre_printoutput/breeam_communities.pdf
- C40 Cities 'Climate Opportunity: More Jobs, Better Health' <https://www.c40.org/research>
- CABR & CSUS. Green Building Research Centre, Healthy Building Evaluation Standard 'Service' Chapter <http://healthybuilding.gbonline.org/>, plus Xiao Wei. Service chapter for interpretation of "Healthy Building Evaluation Standard". Construction Technology, 2018, 49(06): 662-664.
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- Cradle to Cradle Certified™ Products Program (Social Fairness) <https://www.c2ccertified.org/>
- [CRC for Low Carbon Living](#) 2019 Guide to implementing low carbon retrofits for social housing: http://builtbetter.org/files/filefield_paths/LCLGuide_SocialHousing_WEB_0.pdf
- Government of the Republic of Kenya. 2007. Occupational Safety and Health Act. <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/SERIAL/78264/83534/F789589155/KEN78264.pdf>
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<https://gbcsa.org.za/certify/green-star-sa/socio-economic-category-pilot/>
- NAACP, 'Centering Equity in the Sustainable Building Sector': <https://www.naACP.org/climate-justice-resources/centering-equity-sustainable-building-sector/>
- Social Value Toolkit for Architecture; <https://www.architecture.com/-/media/GatherContent/Social-Value-Toolkit-for-Architecture/Additional-Documents/RIBAUoR-Social-Value-Toolkit-2020pdf.pdf>
- United Nations, Social Justice in an Open World.
<https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/ifsd/SocialJustice.pdf>
- USGBC's LEED certification, 'Social Equity' credits:
<https://leeduser.buildinggreen.com/credit/Pilot-Credits/IPpc89#tab-credit-language>

UNDER EMBARGO

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