

The Commitment of the Central American Private Sector to respect Human Rights *Parallel Session on December 2nd, 2014*

CEGESTI is a non for profit organization that promotes since 1990 sustainable development in Central America and The Caribbean. CEGESTI executes the project **“Strengthening Human Rights and Decent Work in Central America”** thanks to the support of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The general objective of the project is to promote the improvement of the regional capacities to ensure respect for human rights and decent work, particularly in the business sector. CEGESTI developed tools to work with companies based on the UN Principles.

Our interest in integrating human rights into business practices, according to the guiding principles, has enabled us to support Private Sector Organizations (Umbrella as well as Chambers) representing more than 3,000 companies in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador, and provide direct assistance to private companies in those countries. Several activities were conducted to promote the guiding principles and support the development of policies and business practices to respect the human rights. For more information www.negociosresponsables.org

Objective and relevance

To share the Commitment of the Central American Private Sector Organizations to respect Human Rights through policies and the integration of human rights into business practices by their member companies, as well as, to facilitate a space of dialogue on barriers and facilitators to achieve Massive Compliance of Human Rights.

- ♦ The side event is an excellent example of scaling up at a national level the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles, but mainly to strengthening the dignity of thousands of workers and their families in our Region.
- ♦ In the case of Guatemala the adoption by the whole corporate private sector, represented by CACIF, of a policy to respect human rights reveals its tradition for the respect of rights. The private sector has taken a public commitment towards the President of the Country and the Human Rights Ombudsman and an Observatory from an independent human rights organization monitors its furtherance of human rights.
- ♦ In the case of the Chambers of Renewable Energy Companies from Honduras and Nicaragua to adopt not only the policies but also to introduce practices at their company members to guarantee compliance with Human Rights. Together these chambers represent 120 companies.
- ♦ The event will show practical cases that caused a positive direct impact on 972 workers, 900 producers, 45 small and medium companies, and benefited indirectly to 1268 producers, 330 companies.

Agenda and speakers

- ♦ Results of integrating the respect of human rights on business practices. The experience of the project: Strengthening Human Rights and Decent Jobs in Central America, executed by CEGESTI with the financial support of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Presented by Daira Gómez, Director of CEGESTI.
- ♦ Commitment of Guatemalan Umbrella Organization of the Private Sector (CACIF) to respect Human Rights and monitor its Compliance. Presented by Carla Caballeros, Executive Director of the Chamber of Agriculture/CACIF.
- ♦ The Commitment of the Renewable Energy sector and the experience of Honduran companies integrating Human Rights in Business Practices. Presented by Mrs. Mariana Luna, Board of Directors of APHER.

Target audience

The event is open to those persons willing to learn how to integrate the respect of human rights into business practices, to scale up of the respect of human rights through the commitment of the organizations representing the private sector and the effectiveness of projects financed by the international cooperation.

The event will be particularly useful for: business companies and producers; chambers of private sectors (agriculture, renewable energy, industry, food and beverage, etc.), members of the International Organization of Employers (IOE) in Latin America and elsewhere, International Cooperation Agencies, Embassies, Financial Organizations and Development Banks.

Main results of the project: Strengthening Human Rights and Decent Work in Central America
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- 1. People and business.** Direct impact: 972 workers, 900 producers, 45 small and medium companies. Indirect benefit: 1268 producers, 330 companies.
- 2. National Level.** Public commitment to respect human rights by private sector organizations representing more than 3,000 companies. In Guatemala, The Committee of Agriculture, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations Business (CACIF), in Nicaragua of The Association of Renewable Energy (Renovables) and The Honduran Association of Renewable Energy Producers (AHPER). Several activities were conducted to promote the guiding principles and support the development of policies to respect the human rights.
- 3. Public Institutions.** Respect of Human Rights by Public Institutions through Sustainable Public Procurement. Direct impact. 12 Ministries and Public Institutions and 400 people trained.
- 4. Multi-stakeholder Dialogue.** Four regional spaces of dialogue with representatives from several stakeholders were achieved. Main issues discussed: the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; green economy and decent work; measures to improve compliance with decent work and integration of human rights in the waste management sector.
- 5. Regional Level. Public Policies /advocacy.** Three public policies were generated with active participation of private sector, ministries and other stakeholders. Policies are: "Integration of the social dimension in business practices"; "Green employment in the sector of waste recollection" and "Promotion of decent work through Sustainable Public Procurement.
- 6. Knowledge Resources.** The project developed and disseminated practical guides to respect human rights, labor practices and protection of the environment reaching hundreds of companies.

Policies Briefs

Guatemala: Policy to Respect Human Rights signed by the Umbrella Organization of the Private Sector of Guatemala

On April, 29th 2014, the Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations of Guatemala (CACIF) have publicly and voluntarily released its institutional policy to respect human rights. Through this policy, CACIF reiterates its commitment to the law and human dignity in alignment with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala. The event was honored with the presence of the President of the Republic of Guatemala, Mr. Otto Pérez Molina, and the Human Rights Ombudsman, Mr. Jorge León.

The signature of this policy is of a great significance in terms of its impact on the dignity of thousands of Guatemalan people that work directly and indirectly for the private sector, but also, because it represents the commitment of the formal private sector highlighting the importance of enabling conditions to formalize employment in Guatemala. An Observatory from an independent human rights organization will monitor furtherance of human rights of the private sector and there is the possibility that this observatory monitors compliance at regional level.

Policy available at:

http://www.cacif.org.gt/images/pdf/politica_lab_ddhh.pdf

Honduras: Policy to Respect to Human Rights in 80 renewable energy producers

AHPER is the group that represents the renewable energy producers and related businesses in Honduras. It was created with the purpose of promoting the country's economic development through searching social, economic and environmentally effective solutions to the different problems experienced by the energy sector. It groups a total of 80

member enterprises, of which 77 work directly in the fields of hydroelectric, wind, solar, geothermal and biomass energies.

On October, 24th 2013, a "Policy to Respect to Human Rights" was approved by the Board of Directors of AHPER. Through this commitment, AHPER communicate and motivate compliance and respect for human rights among its members. Please refer to the attached policy document.

Nicaragua: Commitment established in a Human Rights Policy by 40 renewable energy SME's producers

"Asociación Renovables de Nicaragua" (Renovables Association of Nicaragua) is a non-profit organization founded in 2010 that has brought together more than 40 private enterprises, non-governmental organisms and academic institutions, with the mission of spreading the equitable and efficient use of renewable energy sources in public and private sectors, through projects with local and international partnerships.

On March, 24th 2014, the Board of Directors of RENOVABLES, at a meeting of its members, agreed and welcomed the signing of the "Policy of Respect for Human Rights". This policy recognizes that the influence and the decisions of the business sector, contribute significantly to improving the quality of life of people, their working conditions and the environment. Please refer to the attached policy document.

Nicaragua: Commitment established in a Human Rights Policy by Asociación Pueblos en Acción Comunitaria

The "Asociación Pueblos en Acción Comunitaria (PAC)" (People in Community Action – PAC) is a Christian inspired non-profit non-governmental organization legally constituted on July 02, 1996 and based in Nicaragua. Currently, this organization has 100 collaborators, including technical team and personnel. Its associates are 1268 small rural producers throughout the country, strategically grouped in self-managed groups for economic development (GADE, as abbreviated in Spanish).

On February, 21st, 2014, the General Assembly of PAC, at a meeting of its members, agreed and welcomed the signing of the "Policy of Respect for Human Rights". Through this policy, PAC confirms its commitment to comply with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and to promote the respect of human rights among their affiliates and members.

For more information about CEGESTI's initiatives in the field of business and human rights please visit www.cegesti.org; www.negociosresponsables.org; contact Daira Gómez dgomez@cegesti.org; tel.+506-22808511