



World Benchmarking Alliance Glossary

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Introduction

This document serves as a common reference for the World Benchmarking Alliance’s benchmarks and other deliverables with regards to terminology and definitions. Its purpose is to ensure consistency and help readers to better understand our deliverables.

Definitions are complex and consensus on how to best define a term is often lacking. The ambition of this glossary is to reuse existing and recognized definitions to the extent possible. By clearly stating the definition and the source we refer to we hope to reduce any ambiguity in our texts. If no source is mentioned the definition has been developed by us, sometimes adapted from several sources.

While definitions offer a first layer of clarity on the interpretation of terms, the World Benchmarking Alliance provides more detailed guidance and criteria for our indicators in the research guidelines that go into greater detail about each of our benchmarks.



Glossary

1.5°C (aligned) trajectories: Trajectories aligned with scenarios in which global average is limited to 1.5C above pre-industrial level with no or limited overshoot.

Source: SBTi (2024) - amended

Abatement: Measures that companies take to prevent, reduce or eliminate sources of GHG emissions within their value chain.

Source: SBTi (2024)

Abortion: Refers to an operation or procedure to terminate the pregnancy of a nonviable fetus.

Note: A nonviable fetus is a fetus which is not able to survive outside the womb.

Abundance: The size of a population of a particular life form.

Source: (IPBES, n.a.)

Absenteeism: Missing work because of incapacity of any kind, not just as the result of work-related injury or disease. Absenteeism does not include permitted leave absences.

Accessible design: A design process in which the needs of people with disabilities are specifically considered.

Accessibility: extent to which products, systems, services, environments and facilities can be used by people from a population with the widest range of user needs, characteristics and capabilities to achieve identified goals in identified contexts of use.

Source: ISO (2024)

Adaptation: See 'Climate change adaptation'

Advocacy: the process of influencing decision makers to change their policies and practices, attitudes, or behaviours.

Source: Green (2016)

Affected stakeholder: An individual or group of individuals who are affected, intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly, by an entity's activities and decisions (noting that inaction is also a decision).

Note 1: The term 'affected stakeholders' normally refers to civil society organisations, consumers, customers, employees and other workers, local communities, suppliers, trade unions and their representatives, and vulnerable groups.

Note 2: In the context of managing human rights related impacts, these may also be referred to as "rights holders" or "affected rights holders". The term 'affected stakeholders' captures the broad negative and positive impacts of businesses on people.

Source: IMP (n.a.) referring to UNDP SDG Impact Standard – Glossary - amended

Aggrieved party: any person whose rights or interests are adversely affected.

Alternative proteins: Analogues that directly substitute animal-derived products (e.g., meat or dairy) or ingredients (e.g., fat or whey protein) using precision or biomass fermentation, cultivated, or hybrid food technologies.

Source: FAIRR (n.a.)



Asset: An item of property, such as land, buildings, equipment, owned by a company and used to produce income for the company. The term 'assets' also includes financial assets such as ownership of businesses, real estate or infrastructure assets, or financial products, such as loans and bonds.

Source: SBTi (2024)

Asset class: A group of financial instruments that have similar financial characteristics.

Source: PCAF (2022a)

Baseline: a starting point used for comparisons.

Source: Oxford Languages

Base year: A historic datum (a specific year or, in the case of a base period, an average over multiple years) against which a performance parameter or target is tracked over time.

Source: SBTi (2024) -amended

Basic salary: Fixed, minimum amount paid to an employee for performing his or her duties.

Note that "basic salary" excludes any additional remuneration, such as payments for overtime working or bonuses.

Source: GRI (2022)

Beneficiaries: a person who derives advantage from something, especially a trust, will, or life insurance policy.

Note: In this context the beneficiary may also be an organization.

Source: Oxford Languages – amended with note

Biodiversity: the variability among living organisms from all sources, including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.

Source: CBD (2011)

Biodiversity hotspot: A generic term for an area high in such biodiversity attributes as species richness or endemism. It may also be used in assessments as a precise term applied to geographic areas defined according to two criteria (Myers et al., 2000): (i) containing at least 1,500 species of the world's 300,000 vascular plant species as endemics and (ii) being under threat, in having lost 70% of its primary vegetation. Source: (IPBES, n.a.)

Biodiversity loss: The reduction of any aspect of biological diversity (i.e. diversity at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels) that results from loss in a particular area through death (including extinction), destruction or manual removal; it can refer to many scales, from global extinctions to population extinctions, resulting in decreased total diversity at the same scale, adversely affecting human-environment connections and disrupting the flow of Nature's contribution to people.

Source: (IPBES, n.a.)

Board of directors / Board: See 'Highest governance body'.

Business activities – Everything that a company does in the course of fulfilling the strategy, purpose, objectives and decisions of the business.

Note: This may include activities such as mergers and acquisitions, research and development, design, construction, production, distribution, purchasing, sales, provision of security, contracting, human resource activities, marketing, conduct of external/government relations including lobbying, engagement with stakeholders, relocation of communities, and social investment.

Business enterprise: See 'Company'.



Business partner: Entity with which the organisation has some form of direct and formal engagement for the purpose of meeting its business objectives. Examples include affiliates, business-to-business customers, clients, first-tier suppliers, franchisees, joint venture partners, investee companies in which the organisation has a shareholding position.

Source: GRI (2022)

Business relationship: The relationships a company has with business partners, entities in its value chain and any other State or non-State entity directly linked to its operations, products or services. They include indirect relationships in its value chain, beyond the first tier, and minority as well as majority shareholding positions in joint ventures. It covers both upstream and downstream relationships.

Source: Shift (n.a.)

Bystander training: Training that enables staff that may witness but may not directly experience violence and/or harassment to develop skills to identify inappropriate behaviour at work and attitudes that contribute to a culture of gender inequality.

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions: A colourless, odourless and non-poisonous gas formed by combustion of carbon and in the respiration of living organisms and is considered a greenhouse gas. Emissions means the release of greenhouse gases and/or their precursors into the atmosphere over a specified area and period of time.

Source: EU (n.a. a)

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) equivalent: Measure used to compare the emissions from various types of greenhouse gas (GHG) based on their global warming potential (GWP).

Source: GRI (2022)

Carbon footprint [of a product]: Sum of GHG emissions and GHG removals in a product system expressed as CO₂equivalents and based on a life cycle assessment using the single impact category of climate change

Note: This is commonly referred to as a Product Carbon Footprint. A Product Carbon Footprint can be disaggregated into a set of figures identifying specific GHG emissions and removals. A Product Carbon Footprint can also be disaggregated into the stages of the life cycle.

Source: ISO (2018a) - amended

Carbon footprint [of an organisation]: The total amount of GHG emissions that are directly or indirectly caused by a company's value chain activities.

Child: Every human being below the age of eighteen years.

Source: UNICEF (1989)

Child labour: A situation in which a child who is too young, work or is engaged in work that is hazardous or otherwise unacceptable or unpermitted for people under 18.

Note 1: A child can "work" at an earlier age than 18 as specified in ILO Convention 138 Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (1973) – i.e. if the age is above the age for finishing compulsory schooling, is in any case not less than 15 years of age (and at 14 years of age in specific circumstances in developing countries) and as long as it is not "hazardous work." "Child labour" is work by people under 18 ("children") that is not permitted (as set out above).

Note 2: "Child work" is work by people under 18 ("children") that is permitted. Child work is carried out by "young workers."

Source: ILO (1973)



Civil Society Organisation: Non-state, not-for-profit, voluntary entities formed by people in the social sphere that are separate from the state and the market.

Note: Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) represent a wide range of interests and ties. They can include community-based organisations as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In the context of the UN Guiding Principles Reporting Framework (UN (2011)) and WBA assessments, CSOs do not include business or for-profit associations.

Source: Shift (n.a.) - amended

Climate adaptation solution: Solutions that contributes to enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate change.

Climate change adaptation: See 'Adaptation'

Climate solutions/climate mitigation solutions: Climate solutions are those activities, goods or services that contribute substantially to or enable emissions reductions to support decarbonisation in line with credible 1.5°C pathways towards net zero.

Source: IIGCC (2023) – amended

Note: Alternative definitions exist. ERI (2023a) refers to a product or service that meets a need in society, contributes to the reduction of GHG emissions, and has significantly lower emissions than BAU options. Production and consumption of climate solutions is compatible with the global 1.5°C ambition, and will accelerate the transition towards a net zero carbon economy.

Collect/Collection [of information regarding users]: All means by which a company may gather information about the users of its services.

Note: A company may collect this information directly in a range of situations, including when users upload content for public sharing, submit phone numbers for account verification, transmit personal information in private conversation with one another, etc. A company may also collect this information indirectly, for example, by recording log data, account information, metadata, and other related information that describes users and/or documents their activities.

Collective bargaining: Collective bargaining refers to all negotiations that take place between an employer, a group of employers or one or more employers' organisations, on the one hand, and one or more workers' organisations, on the other, for: (a) determining working conditions and terms of employment; and/or (b) regulating relations between employers and workers; and/or (c) regulating relations between employers or their organisations and a workers' organisation or workers' organisations.

Collective bargaining agreements: Collective bargaining agreements (CBA) are written agreements regarding working conditions and terms of employment concluded between one or more employers or employers' organisations, on the one hand, and one or more representative workers' organisations or duly elected and authorised representatives of the workers (according to national laws and regulations), on the other.

Company [general term]: A company is any form of business organization that engages in a business or commercial activity for profit. Commonly, companies are incorporated as separate legal entities from their owners, and they have rights, liabilities, and legal capacities distinct from those of their owners or members.

Note: UN Guiding Principles (UN (2011)) sometimes refers to 'companies' but more often to 'business enterprises' and includes enterprises of the real economy, investors and other financial institutions.

Source: LLI (2021) – amended



Company [WBA application of term]: Any kind of organization: publicly listed, privately-owned or operated by the government.

Note: For simplicity, WBA refers to all types of assessed entities as companies.

Commitment: A publicly available statement, policy or strategy with a clear commitment to act on a topic

Note 1: The company 'commits' to something by having a publicly available statement, policy or strategy with a clear commitment to act on the topic.

Note 2: A commitment is approved at the highest levels of the business, or by a formalised group of persons charged with ultimate authority in an organisation, e.g. the board.

Climate change adaptation: Adjustments in ecological, social or economic systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli and their effects or impacts. Adaptation refers to changes in processes, practices and structures to moderate potential damages or to benefit from opportunities associated with climate change.

Source: SBTi (2024)

Climate change mitigation: Policies and measures which aim to reduce greenhouse gases from companies and governments with the intention of lessening the global impacts of climate change, such as reducing the amount and intensity of fossil fuel burning.

Source: CDP (n.a. a)

Connectivity [with regards to nature]: The degree to which the landscape or waterscape facilitates the movement of organisms (animals, plant reproductive structures, pollen, pollinators, spores etc.) and other environmentally important resources (e.g. nutrients and moisture) between similar habitats. Connectivity is hampered by fragmentation (q.v.).

Source: IPBES (n.a.)

Corruption: Abuse of entrusted power for private gain, which can be instigated by individuals or organisations.

Note: Corruption includes practices such as bribery, facilitation payments, fraud, extortion, collusion, and money laundering. It also includes an offer or receipt of any gift, loan, fee, reward, or other advantage to or from any person as an inducement to do something that is dishonest, illegal, or a breach of trust in the conduct of the enterprise's business.

Source: GRI (2016a)

Critical habitat: Areas with high biodiversity value, including (i) habitat of significant importance to critically endangered and/or endangered species; (ii) habitat of significant importance to endemic and/or restricted-range species; (iii) habitat supporting globally significant concentrations of migratory species and/or congregator species; (iv) highly threatened and/or unique ecosystems; and/or (v) areas associated with key evolutionary processes.

Note: Critically endangered and/or endangered species are those listed on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. The determination of critical habitat is based on other listings such as lists of nationally/regionally as critically endangered or endangered species, on a case-by-case basis.

Source: (IPBES, n.a.)

Cybersecurity: Collection of tools, policies, security concepts, security safeguards, guidelines, risk management approaches, actions, training, best practices, assurance and technologies that can be used to protect the cyber environment and organization and user's assets.

Source: ITU (2008)



Data breach: An occurrence when an unauthorized party gains access to user information that a company collects, retains, or otherwise processes, and which compromises the integrity, security, or confidentiality of that information.

Data security: Protection of all types of data from unauthorized access, breaches, and cyber threats.
Note: This is not to be confused with 'data protection', which primarily concerns ethical handling of personal data.

Development Assistance Committee (DAC): The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is a forum in which the major bilateral donors work together to support sustainable development in developing countries.
Source: OECD (2020)

Data privacy: The ability of a person to determine when, how, and to what extent personal information about them is shared with or communicated to others.

Deforestation: The process of harvesting forests for natural resources or to clear land for agriculture or construction. Deforestation that occurs faster than forests are able to recover causes environmental damage such as loss of biodiversity and climate change.
Source: CDP (n.a. a)

Degradation [in the context of nature]: See 'Habitat degradation'

Habitat degradation: The set of processes by which habitat quality is reduced. Habitat degradation may occur through natural processes (e.g. drought, heat, cold) and through human activities (forestry, agriculture, urbanisation).
Source: BBOP (2012)

Direct supplier/Tier 1 supplier: A company that provides goods or services to another company without going through a middleman.

Disclosure: All information released by a company for the purpose of informing shareholders or other stakeholders.

Discrimination: Act and result of treating persons unequally by imposing unequal burdens or denying benefits instead of treating each person fairly on the basis of individual merit. Discrimination can also include harassment, defined as a course of comments or actions that are unwelcome, or should reasonably be known to be unwelcome, to the person towards whom they are addressed.
Source: GRI (2022)

Diversity: the practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, etc.
Source: Oxford Languages

Divestment: the process of selling subsidiary assets, investments, or divisions of a company.
Source: Investopedia

Double materiality: a concept which provides criteria for determination of whether a sustainability topic or information has to be included in the undertaking's sustainability report. Double materiality is the union (in mathematical terms, i.e. union of two sets, not intersection) of impact materiality and financial materiality. A sustainability topic or information meets therefore the criteria of double materiality if it is material from the impact perspective or from the financial perspective or from both of these two perspectives.
Source: EFRAG (2022a)



Downstream: Downstream refers to processes and impacts associated with the use of a company's products and services and any disposal associated with those or the company's operation.

Due diligence: Process to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for how the organisation addresses its actual and potential negative impacts.

Source: GRI (2022)

Economic value generated and distributed (EVGD): A metric that measures the direct monetary value that a company provides for the local economy through generation of products and services, servicing of capital, payment of wages, taxes and community investment.

Source: GRI (2016c)

Ecosystem: A dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit.

Source: *Convention on Biological Diversity*

Ecosystem integrity: The ability of an ecosystem to support and maintain ecological processes and a diverse community of organisms. It is measured as the degree to which a diverse community of native organisms is maintained. It is used as a proxy for ecological resilience, intended as the capacity of an ecosystem to adapt in the face of stressors, while maintaining the functions of interest.

From Ocean Health Index.

Source: (IPBES, n.a.)

Ecosystem services: The range of benefits provided to humans by healthy ecosystems. Services include provisioning (such as food and wood), regulating (for example climate, flood and water regulation) and cultural services (for example, spiritual, recreation, educational).

Source: EU (n.a. a)

Effectiveness criteria [in the context of non-judicial grievance mechanisms]: criteria referring to the quality of the process associated with non-judicial grievance mechanisms

Note: The UN Guiding Principles (UN (2011)) define eight "effectiveness criteria" for non-judicial grievance mechanisms. They should be: legitimate, accessible, predictable, equitable, transparent, rights-compatible, based on dialogue and engagement, and a source of continuous learning. While these criteria mostly relate to the quality of processes, they include an important requirement that outcomes should be in line with internationally-recognised human rights. (See UN Guiding Principle 31).

Source: UN (2011)

Embedding [with regards to human rights]: The macro-level process of ensuring that a company's responsibility to respect human rights is driven across the organisation, into its business processes, values and culture.

Note: Embedding is one continual process, generally driven from the top of the company. (See UN Guiding Principle 16). It requires that all personnel are aware of the company's public commitment to respect human rights, understand its implications for how they conduct their work, are trained, empowered and incentivised to act in ways that support the commitment, and regard it as intrinsic to the core values of the workplace.

Source: UN (2011)

Emerging markets and developing economies: markets and economies that experience considerable growth and have some, but not all, of the features of developed market economies.

Emission reduction: See 'GHG reductions'.



Employee category: breakdown of employees by level (such as senior management, middle management) and function (such as technical, administrative, production).

Source: GRI (2016a)

Employee turnover: Employees leaving the organization voluntarily or due to dismissal, retirement, or death in service.

Facilitated emissions: greenhouse gas emissions that result from the facilitation of financial transactions by financial institutions.

Source: PCAF (2023) - amended

Fiduciary duty (downstream): The legal and ethical obligation of one party (the fiduciary) to act in the best interests of their client.

Note: fiduciary duties include such as duties of care, loyalty, good faith, confidentiality, prudence, disclose.

Source: Investopedia (n.a.)

Financed emissions [as umbrella term]: Absolute greenhouse gas emissions associated with a financial institution's provision of products, services and capital.

Note: Financed emissions as an umbrella term encompasses financed emissions, facilitated emissions and insurance-associated emissions.

Financed emissions [specific]: greenhouse gas emissions associated with lending and investments.

Source: PCAF (2022a) - amended

Financial activities: Activities associated with the provision of products services and capital by a financial institution such as investing, lending, investment banking, insurance underwriting and advising.

Financial materiality: A sustainability topic is material from a financial perspective if it triggers financial effects on undertakings, i.e. generates risks or opportunities that influence or are likely to influence the future cash flows and therefore the enterprise value of the undertaking in the short, medium or long term but are not captured by financial reporting at the reporting date.

Source: EFRAG (2022a)

Food label: Any tag, brand, mark, pictorial or other descriptive matter that is written, printed, stencilled, marked, embossed or impressed on, or attached to, a container of food or food product. It usually includes information on the ingredients, quality and nutritional value of the product.

Source: UN FAO (2021)

Forced labour: All work and service that is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered themselves voluntarily.

Note 1: Forced labour, contemporary forms of slavery, debt bondage and human trafficking are closely related terms though not identical in a legal sense. Most situations of slavery or human trafficking are however covered by ILO's definition of forced labour.

Note 2: Forced labour may manifest itself in different ways, such as coercion to work through the use of violence or intimidation, or by more subtle means such as accumulated debt, retention of identity papers or threats of denunciation to immigration authorities.

Source: ILO (1930)



Fossil fuels: Carbon-based fuels from fossil hydrocarbon deposits, including coal, oil, and natural gas.

Note: fossil fuel covers coal, coal products, natural gas, manufactured gas, crude oil and petroleum products and non-renewable wastes. Petroleum products include but are not limited tar sands oil, offshore oil, as well as fracked and conventional oil.

Source: IPCC (n.a.)

Fossil fuel sectors: Sectors which perform activities such as production, process, distribution, storage and combustion of fossil fuels.

Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC): A specific right granted to Indigenous Peoples recognised in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) , which aligns with their universal right to self-determination.

Note: FPIC allows Indigenous Peoples to provide or withhold/ withdraw consent, at any point, regarding projects impacting their territories. FPIC also allows Indigenous Peoples to engage in negotiations to shape the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of projects.

Source: UN (2007)

Freedom of association: the right of workers and employers to create and join organisations of their choice freely and without fear of reprisal or interference.

Note: This includes the right to establish and affiliate to confederations and international organisations.

Source: ILO (2011)

Fundamental rights at work: Right covering: (a) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; (b) the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; (c) the effective abolition of child labour; (d) the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation; and (e) a safe and healthy working environment.

Note: The rights are set out in ILO (2022), and are often referred to as the ILO core labour standards

Source: ILO (2022)

Gender needs assessment: An assessment of the needs of women workers in order to understand the specific issues facing them and identify possible areas of intervention that support gender equality and women's empowerment.

Note: A gender needs assessment need not be stand-alone so long as it assesses the needs of female workers in the context of broader worker needs (e.g. financial well-being).

Gender pay gap: The difference between average hourly earnings of men and average hourly earnings of women expressed as a percentage of average hourly earnings of men.

Note 1: Median (Gender) pay gap refers to the difference between the midpoints in the ranges of hourly earnings of men and women. It takes all salaries in the sample, lines them up in order from lowest to highest, and picks the middle salary.

Note 2: Mean gender pay gap refers to the difference between the average hourly earnings of men and women (i.e., gender pay gap).

Gender responsive: Outcomes that reflect an understanding of gender roles and inequalities and which make an effort to encourage equal participation and equal and fair distribution of benefits.

Note: Gender responsiveness is accomplished through gender analysis and gender inclusiveness.

Gender-responsive health information and services: Health information and services that take into account the specific health needs of women and girls.



Gender-responsive procurement: A sustainable selection of services, goods or civil works that takes into account the impact on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Note: It is an opportunity for the procuring entity to expand its global markets, diversifying its supply chains while simultaneously growing the economy and improving the lives of women around the globe by screening suppliers for alignment to elimination of discrimination against women, the empowerment of women, and the achievement of equality between women and men.

Government demands: Demands from government ministries or agencies, law enforcement, and court orders in criminal and civil cases.

Greenhouse gases (GHG): Gaseous constituents of the atmosphere, both natural and anthropogenic, that absorb and emit radiation at specific wavelengths within the spectrum of radiation emitted by the Earth's surface, by the atmosphere itself, and by clouds. This property causes the greenhouse effect. Water vapour (H₂O), carbon dioxide (CO₂), nitrous oxide (N₂O), methane (CH₄) and ozone (O₃) are the primary GHGs in the Earth's atmosphere. Human-made GHGs include sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and perfluorocarbons (PFCs); several of these are also O₃-depleting (and are regulated under the Montreal Protocol).

Source: IPCC (n.a.)

GHG emission: Release of a GHG into the atmosphere

Source: ISO (2018a)

GHG reductions: Actions that reduce the quantity of GHGs attributable to an entity vis-a-vis a baseline.

Source: UNFCCC (2021)

GHG removals: Actions that remove GHGs from the atmosphere relative to baseline.

Source: UNFCCC (2021)

Global Warming Potential (GWP): Global-warming potential, abbreviated as GWP, is a term used to describe the relative potency, molecule for molecule, of a greenhouse gas, taking account of how long it remains active in the atmosphere.

Note: The global-warming potentials (GWPs) currently used are those calculated over 100 years. Carbon dioxide is taken as the gas of reference and given a 100-year GWP of 1.

Source: Eurostat (n.a.)

Governance: The structures, processes and actions through which private and public actors interact to address societal goals. This includes formal and informal institutions and the associated norms, rules, laws and procedures for deciding, managing, implementing and monitoring policies and measures at any geographic or political scale, from global to local.

Source: IPCC (n.a.)

Grievance: Perceived injustice evoking an individual's or a group's sense of entitlement, which may be based on law, contract, explicit or implicit promises, customary practice, or general notions of fairness of aggrieved communities.

Source: UN (2011)

Grievance mechanism: Routinised process through which grievances can be raised and remedy can be sought.

Source: UN (2011)



Habitat: The place or type of site where an organism or population naturally occurs. Also used to mean the environmental attributes required by a particular species or its ecological niche.

Source: (IPBES, n.a.)

Implement: put a decision, plan, agreement, etc. into effect.

Source: Oxford Languages

Highest governance body: Formalised group of individuals responsible for the strategic guidance of an organisation, the effective monitoring of management and the accountability of management to the broader organisation and its stakeholders with the highest authority in the organisation.

Note: If there is no independent governance body the accountability stays with the most senior executive level.

Human and environmental rights defenders: People who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights or the environment.

Human rights: Basic international standards aimed at securing dignity and equality for all. Every human being is entitled to enjoy them without discrimination.

Note: They include the rights contained in the International Bill of Human Rights (see definition). They also include the principles concerning fundamental rights at work set out in the International Labour Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (ILO (2022)).

Human rights defender: People who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights.

Human rights due diligence: An ongoing risk management process that a reasonable and prudent financial institution needs to follow in order to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how it addresses its adverse human rights impacts.

Note: As set out by UN (2011), this includes four key steps: assessing actual and potential human rights impacts; integrating and acting on the findings; tracking responses; and communicating about how impacts are addressed.

Human rights risks: A company's human rights risks are any risks that its operations may lead to one or more negative human rights impacts. They therefore relate to its potential human rights impacts. Importantly, a company's human rights risks are the risks that its operations pose to human rights.

Note: This is separate from any risks that involvement in human rights impacts may pose to the enterprise, although the two are increasingly related.

Human rights impacts – A 'negative human rights impact' or 'human rights abuse' or 'human rights harms' occur when an action removes or reduces the ability of an individual to enjoy his or her human rights.

Note 1: Human rights impacts can either have occurred or be on-going or be potential human rights impacts in the future, which are also referred to as 'human right risks'.

Note 2: The term 'human rights violation' is used when governments are the source or cause of the harm.

Impact: Effect the organisation has or could have on the economy, environment, and people, including on their human rights, which in turn can indicate its contribution (negative or positive) to sustainable development

Note: Impacts can be actual or potential, negative or positive, short-term or long-term, intended or unintended, and reversible or irreversible.

Source: GRI (2022)



Impact investing: Investments that are made with the goal of creating a positive environmental or social impact, as well as financial returns.

Source: UNEPFI (2017)

Impact management: The process by which an organisation understands, acts on and communicates its impacts on people and the natural environment, in order to reduce negative impacts, increase positive impacts, and ultimately to achieve sustainability and increase well-being.

Ref: IMP (2021)

Impact management system A system for managing impacts including a) strategy embedment b) establishing oversight and accountability (governance) c) identification of impacts d) measuring, assessing and valuing impacts e) prioritising impacts and practices f) target setting g) implementation h) monitoring, learning and adapting and i) Disclosing and explaining outcomes.

Ref: IMP (2021)

Impact materiality: A sustainability topic or information is material from an impact perspective if the undertaking is connected to actual or potential significant impacts on people or the environment and is related to the sustainability topic over the short, medium or long term. This includes impacts directly caused or contributed to by the undertaking and impacts which are otherwise directly linked to the undertaking's upstream and downstream value chain.

Source: EFRAG (2022a)

Interim target: A short or medium-term milestone between the current period and a long-term target.

Indigenous peoples: *Given the diversity of indigenous peoples, an official definition of "indigenous" has not been adopted by any UN-system body. Instead the system has developed a modern understanding of this term based on a number of factors: self-identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member; historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies; strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources; distinct social, economic or political systems; distinct language, culture and beliefs; from non-dominant groups of society; resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities. (See the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN (2007)).*

Informal work: Work without a formal contract, lacking social protection, rights at work and decent working conditions.

Insurance-associated emissions: greenhouse gas emissions associated with underwriting.

Source: PCAF (2022b) - amended

International Bill of Human Rights: This term covers the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Source: UN (n.a.), UN (1948), UN (1967), UN (1966)

Invasive alien species (IAS): Plants, animals, pathogens and other organisms that are non-native to an ecosystem, and which may cause economic or environmental harm or adversely affect human health. In particular, they impact adversely upon biodiversity, including decline or elimination of native species – through competition, predation or transmission of pathogens – and the disruption of local ecosystems and ecosystem functions.



Just transition: Greening the economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind.

Note: A just transition involves maximizing the social and economic opportunities of climate action, while minimizing and carefully managing any challenges – including through effective social dialogue among all groups impacted, and respect for fundamental labour principles and rights.

Source: ILO (n.a. b)

Key Biodiversity Areas: Sites, including both protected and unprotected sites, mapped at a national scale by local partners using a globally standardised framework drawn from IUCN's Best Practice Protected Areas guidelines series. Sites are considered globally important if they are known to hold one or more globally threatened species, endemic species, globally significant concentrations or populations, significant examples of biological communities or any combination of these features. These sites are known as Key Biodiversity Areas.

Note: Key Biodiversity Areas build upon the work of other initiatives – such as BirdLife International's Important Bird Areas, PlantLife International's Important Plant Areas, IUCN's Important Sites for Freshwater Biodiversity and sites identified by the Alliance for Zero Extinction – to map important sites for a wide range of critical biodiversity in marine, freshwater and terrestrial biomes. These datasets are drawn from the World Biodiversity Database (WBDB), managed by BirdLife International and Conservation International, which is informed by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Source: BBOP (2012)

Key industry risks [with regards to human rights]: The human rights risks commonly regarded as potentially severe and/or likely within the industry and that companies are expected to demonstrate, through a process of human rights due diligence, how they are preventing them or why they are not relevant.

Note: While these risks are anticipated to be relevant given the company's industry, they may not necessarily be the individual company's most salient human rights issues.

Note: See also 'Salient human rights issues'.

Legitimate tenure rights holders: Existing tenure rights holders, whether recorded/formal/recognised or not.

Note: This can include those of customary and informal tenure, groups under customary tenure systems, those holding subsidiary tenure rights, such as gathering rights (FAO CFS Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security).

Leverage [in the context of human rights]: The ability of a company to effect change in the wrongful practices of another party that is causing or contributing to an adverse human rights impact. (ST)

Like for like: When a source of emissions and an emissions sink correspond in terms of their warming impact, and in terms of the timescale and durability of carbon storage. For example, fossil carbon is stable in the lithosphere over millennia if it is not extracted and burned, therefore mitigating measures (e.g. offsets) that aim to neutralise the effect of these emissions must persist for a comparable, geological-timescale. Although all CO₂ once emitted, whether originally sourced from the lithosphere or biosphere, persists in the active carbon cycle for centuries to millennia, it may be appropriate to balance shorter-duration carbon released from biogenic carbon stocks (e.g. forests and soils) with comparably temporary storage in like stocks. The variable risks of reversal of different carbon stocks must also be considered, for example forests may suffer from unforeseen anthropogenic (e.g. illegal logging), non-anthropogenic (e.g. disease and disaster), or climate change-induced (e.g. warming) reversal risks.

Source: UNFCCC (2021)



Livelihoods: A means of securing the basic necessities of life, such as food, water, shelter and clothing.

Living income: The net annual income required for a household in a particular place to afford a decent standard of living for all members of that household.

Note 1: Elements of a decent standard of living include food, clean water, sanitary housing, education, healthcare, transportation, clothing, and other essential needs including provision for unexpected events.

Note 2: Living income refers to any income earner including those self-employed such as self-employed farmers.

Source: LICoP (n.a.)

Living wage: the wage level that is necessary to afford a decent standard of living for workers and their families, taking into account the country circumstances and calculated for the work performed during the normal hours of work.

Note 1: The concept of living wage is generally applied in the context of hired workers.

Note 2: Living wage estimates translate the living wage concept into a local monetary value and can contribute to and inform an evidence-based social dialogue for wage setting. The ILO has set out range of methodological principles for determining living wage estimates.

Source: ILO (2024)

Lobbying: Activities carried out with the objective of directly or indirectly influencing the formulation or implementation of policy or legislation, or the decision-making processes of governments, governmental institutions, regulators, bodies, offices and agencies or standard setters.

Note: Such activities include (non-exhaustive list): organising or participating in meetings, conferences, events; contributing to/participating in public consultations, hearings or other similar initiatives; membership of or participating in trade associations, alliances, coalitions, or similar bodies; organising communication campaigns, platforms, networks, grassroots initiatives; preparing/commissioning policy and position papers, opinion polls, surveys, open letters, research work as per the activities covered by transparency register rules. (new CSI)

Source: EFRAG (2022b) – amended

Local communities: Individuals or groups of individuals living or working in areas that are affected or that could be affected by an organisation's activities. The local community can range from those living adjacent to the organisation's operations to those living at a distance and includes those that have a long association with the lands and waters that they have traditionally lived on or used.

Note: Many communities may be considered local and may also be described as traditional communities. Some local communities may include peoples of indigenous descent. They are culturally diverse and occur on all inhabited continents. Source: UNCBD, (2006)

Low-income country: Country defined to belong to the country group with lowest income as defined by the World Bank.

Note: The classifications are updated each year on July 1, based on the GNI per capita of the previous calendar year. The World Bank's income classification aims to reflect a country's level of development, drawing on Atlas GNI per capita as a broadly available indicator of economic capacity.

Source: World Bank (2023)



Lower-middle income country: Country defined to belong to the country group with second lowest income as defined by the World Bank.

Note: The classifications are updated each year on July 1, based on the GNI per capita of the previous calendar year. The World Bank's income classification aims to reflect a country's level of development, drawing on Atlas GNI per capita as a broadly available indicator of economic capacity.

Source: World Bank (2023)

Marginalised groups: Specific groups or populations that require particular attention, including indigenous peoples, women; national or ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities; children; persons with disabilities; and migrant workers and their families.

Source: UN (2011)

Materiality: the criterion for inclusion of specific information in corporate reports. It reflects (i) the significance of the information in relation to the phenomenon it purports to depict or explain, as well as (ii) its capacity to meet the needs and expectations of the stakeholders of an undertaking and of the undertaking itself, allowing for proper decision-making, and more generally (iii) the needs for transparency corresponding to the public interest.

Source: EFRAG (2022a)

Material sustainability impact: Impact connected to actual or potential significant impact on people or the environment, related to the sustainability topic over the short, medium or long term.

Source: Based on EFRAG (2022a)

Material topics: Topics that represent the organisation's most significant impacts on the economy, environment, and people, including impacts on their human rights

Source: GRI (2022).

Materiality assessment: The process of identifying, refining, and assessing numerous potential environmental, social and governance issues that could affect business, and/or its stakeholders, and condensing them into a short-list of topics that inform company strategy, targets, and reporting.

Source: UNEPFI (2017)

Maternal health: The health of women during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period. It encompasses the healthcare dimensions of family planning, preconception, prenatal, and postnatal care in order to ensure a positive and fulfilling experience, in most cases, and reduce maternal morbidity and mortality, in other cases.

Maternity leave: Employment-protected leave of absence for employed mothers at or in the first few months after childbirth.

Note: The ILO recommends at least 14 weeks of paid maternity leave.

Menstrual health: The menstrual hygiene management practices and the broader systemic factors that link menstruation with health, well-being, gender, education, equity, empowerment and human rights (in particular the human right to water and sanitation).

Mental health: A state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

Mental health services: The assessment, diagnosis, treatment or counselling in a professional relationship to assist an individual or group in alleviating mental or emotional illness, symptoms, conditions or disorders.



Middle/other management: Management levels of a hierarchical organization that is subordinate to the executive management

Note: This usually refers to the department heads and coordinators with line/ employee management responsibility, but this may vary between companies.

Mitigation (general) Action(s) taken to reduce the extent of a negative impact

Note 1: The mitigation of an actual negative impact refers to actions taken to reduce the severity of the negative impact that has occurred, with any residual impact needing remediation. The mitigation of a potential negative impact refers to actions taken to reduce the likelihood of the negative impact occurring.

Note 2: In the context of human rights this refers to actions taken actions taken to reduce the likelihood that a potential negative impact will occur.

Note 3: For mitigation in the context of climate change refer to 'Climate change mitigation'

Source: UN (2012)

Mitigation hierarchy: A set of prioritized, sequential components that are applied to reduce the potential negative impacts of project activities.

Note 1: In the context of natural environment this refers to negative impacts on the natural environment and these steps are usually understood to be: avoid, mitigate, restore/rehabilitate, offset, and compensate.

Note 2: In the context of climate mitigation this refers to GHG emissions and include steps such as prevention, reduction, substitution, neutralisation and offsetting. Different versions of the climate mitigation hierarchy exist.

Note 3: In the context of waste this usually includes prevention, reuse, recycling, recovery and disposal.

Monitor: Observe and check the progress or quality of (something) over a period of time; keep under systematic review.

Source: Oxford Languages

Natural capital: The world's stocks of natural assets which include geology, soil, air, water and all living things. It is from this Natural Capital that humans derive a wide range of services, often called 'ecosystem services, which make human life possible.

Source: UNEPFI (2017)

Nature: All non-human living entities and their interaction with other living or non-living physical entities and processes.

Note 1: This definition recognises that interaction bind humans to nature, and its subcomponents (e.g., species, soils, rivers, nutrients), to one another.

Note 2: This concept encompasses biodiversity as well as ecosystems.

Source: SBTN (2022)

Nature protection: Precautionary actions, procedures or installations undertaken to prevent or reduce harm to the elements of the material world that exist independently of human activity.

Source: EEA (n.a.)

Nature restoration: supporting the recovery of degraded or destroyed ecosystems by improving their structure and functions, with the overall goal of improving resilience and biodiversity in nature.

Source: EU (n.a. b)



Nature's contributions to people (NCP): All the contributions, both positive and negative, of living nature (i.e. all organisms, ecosystems and their associated ecological and evolutionary processes) to people's quality of life.

Note 1: Beneficial contributions include e.g. food provision, water purification, flood control and artistic inspiration, whereas detrimental contributions include e.g. disease transmission and predation that damages people or their assets.

Note 2: NCP may be perceived as benefits or detriments depending on the cultural, temporal or spatial context.

Nature-based solutions: Actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human wellbeing, ecosystem services and resilience and biodiversity benefits.

Note: Nature-based solutions are sometimes referring specifically to solutions aiming to help climate change mitigation.

Source: CDP (n.a. a) – note added

Nature-positive: aligning with the Nature-positive goal

Nature-positive goal [at a global scale]: A global societal goal defined as 'Halt and Reverse Nature Loss by 2030 on a 2020 baseline, and achieve full recovery by 2050.

Note 1: This is also the goal of the Global Biodiversity Framework as a Biodiversity Plan (UNCBD 2022), although the Biodiversity Plan does not use this term

Note 2: Delivering the Nature Positive goal requires measurable net-positive biodiversity outcomes through the improvement in the abundance, diversity, integrity and resilience of species, ecosystems and natural processes.

Source: NPI (2024).

Nature-positive future: a world of living in harmony with nature where by 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people.

Note: This is in line with the vision of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) regarding a world of living in harmony with nature where "by 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people."

Source: UNDP (2021)

Nature-positive finance: Finance that supports actions that protect, restore or enhance sustainable use and management of nature, or enables these actions contributing to the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and its broad ambition to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030, with a view to full recovery by 2050.

Note: Such an action must also meet all the following eligibility criteria: i) makes a substantive contribution to nature ii) has expected positive outcomes for nature that are measurable and can be monitored against a baseline, where feasible, or otherwise a business-as-usual scenario iii) is not expected to introduce significant adverse environmental risks or impacts.

Source: MDBs (2023)



Nature-positive solutions: Actions that protect, restore or enhance sustainable use and management of nature, or enables these actions contributing to the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and its broad ambition to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030, with a view to full recovery by 2050.

Note 1: According to (EIB 2023) such an action must also meet all the following eligibility criteria: i) makes a substantive contribution to nature ii) has expected positive outcomes for nature that are measurable and can be monitored against a baseline, where feasible, or otherwise a business-as-usual scenario iii) is not expected to introduce significant adverse environmental risks or impacts.

Note 2: This includes such as actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human wellbeing, ecosystem services and resilience and biodiversity benefits.

Note 3: See also nature-based solutions

Negative (or adverse) impact on human rights: A negative or adverse human rights impact occurs when an action removes or reduces the ability of an individual to enjoy his or her human rights.

Net zero/ net zero state: The state reached by an organisation that has reduced its value chain emissions (scope 1, scope 2 and scope 3 emissions) following a science-based pathway, with any remaining residual greenhouse gas emissions being fully neutralized by permanent or like-for-like removals exclusively claimed by that organisation.

Note 1: The term 'residual' refers to emissions that remain technically unfeasible to be eliminated. A widely applicable guideline is that such residual emissions shall not exceed 10% of baseline emissions.

Note 2: 90% reduction is a guideline. The actual emission reductions required to reach net zero depend on companies' baseline emissions. Science-based thresholds for residual emissions per unit have been established for activities in some sectors (e.g. energy and steel production)

Source: ERI (2023b) – definition based on UNFCCC (2022), ISO (2022) and SBTi (2023) - amended by ERI from ITU (2023a).

Net zero transition: the transition of a company towards a net zero state.

Nutrient profile model (NPM): A tool used to classify or score food products according to their nutritional composition and impact on health.

Note: The nutrition and health community recommends the use of the following NPMs: Health star rating system, Nutri-score, UK Nutrient profiling model, WHO regional nutrient profile (EURO, EMRO, WPRO, SEARO, PAHO, AFRO)

Source: WHO (2011)

Official development assistance: government aid that promotes and specifically targets the economic development and welfare of developing countries.

Source: OECD (n.a.)

Organisation: person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its objectives

Note 1: The concept of organisation includes, but is not limited to, sole-trader, company, corporation, firm, enterprise, authority, partnership, charity or institution, or part or combination thereof, whether incorporated or not, public or private.

Source: ISO (2015)

Outsourced chief investment officer: A resource for organisations that can take on accountability and fiduciary responsibility for an asset pool, including strategic investment decisions.



Paid primary and secondary carer leave: Parental leave with at least 2/3 of full salary, paid by the employer or social security (or both), for people with the responsibility to care for their child following their birth or adoption.

Paternity leave: Employment-protected leave of absence for employed fathers at or in the first few months after childbirth.

Note: Paternity leave is not stipulated by international convention. In general, periods of paternity leave are much shorter than periods of maternity leave. Because of their short length, workers on paternity leave often continue to receive full wage payments. The ILO recognizes that current best practice with regard to paternity leave is two weeks or more of paid leave.

Pay gap: an undesirable or unfair difference between the average amounts that two sectors of a population are paid.

Source: Oxford Languages

Personal data: any information that relates to an identified or identifiable living individual.

Source: EU (n.a. c)

Plant based proteins: Products made by conventional fermentation (e.g., tofu or tempeh), as well as plant-based whole food proteins and fats such as legumes, pulses, wholegrains, nuts.

Source: FAIRR (n.a.)

Policy: A set or framework of general objectives and management principles developed by an organisation to govern its actions and decision-making on a specific topic.

Note: A policy is approved at the highest levels of the business, or by a formalised group of persons charged with ultimate authority in an organisation, e.g. the board.

Political contribution [general]: financial or in-kind support given directly or indirectly to political parties, their elected representatives, or persons seeking political office.

Note 1: Financial contributions can include donations, loans, sponsorships, retainers, or the purchase of tickets for fundraising events or other similar actions.

Note 2: In-kind contributions can include advertising, use of facilities, design and printing, donation of equipment, or the provision of board membership, employment or consultancy work for elected politicians or candidates for office.

Source: GRI (2022)

Political contribution [direct]: financial or in-kind support provided directly to political parties, their elected representatives or persons seeking political office.

Source: EFRAG (2022b)

Political contribution [indirect]: political contributions made through an intermediary organisation such as a lobbyist or charity, or support given to an organisation such as a think tank or trade association linked to or supporting particular political parties or causes.

Source: EFRAG (2022b)

Positive impact finance: Refers to all types of finance which verifiably produce a positive impact on the economy, society or the environment once any potential negative impacts have been duly identified and mitigated.

Source: UNEPFI (2017)

Prevention: Actions taken to ensure a negative impact does not occur.

Note: Impact may e.g. be a negative human rights impact or a negative impact on the environment



Primary carer: The person with the primary responsibility for caring for a child.

Note: The primary carer is often the biological mother but can be someone else e.g. in case of adoption or same-sex parents.

Product carbon footprint: See 'Carbon footprint (of a product)'

Promotion: A permanent change when an employee advances to a raised or higher office or rank on an ongoing basis.

Note: This does not refer to temporary changes to duties or in circumstances where an employee transfers to a position of equal rank or relocates to an overseas office.

Protected area: A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated values to people.

Note: There are multiple categories of protected areas, including and excluding people from within their boundaries.

Source: IUCN (2012)

Public commitment to respect human rights: A high-level and widely available statement by a company that sets out its intention to respect human rights with the expectation of being accountable for achieving that aim.

Note: See Guiding Principle 16 in UN(2011).

Source: UN (2011)

Real economy: The totality of businesses that produce goods and services (as opposed to businesses that solely buy and sell at financial markets).

Reduction in GHG emissions: See 'GHG reductions'.

Remediation/remedy: The process of providing remedy for a negative human rights impact and the substantive outcomes that can counteract, or make good, the negative impact.

Note: These outcomes may take a range of forms such as apologies, restitution, rehabilitation, financial or non-financial compensation, and punitive sanctions (whether criminal or administrative, such as fines), as well as the prevention of harm through, for example, injunctions or guarantees of non-repetition.

Remuneration: basic salary plus additional amounts paid to a worker

Note: Examples of additional amounts paid to a worker can include those based on years of service, bonuses including cash and equity such as stocks and shares, benefit payments, overtime, time owed, and any additional allowances, such as transportation, living and childcare allowances.

Source: GRI (2022)

Reporting period: specific time period covered by the reported information

Examples: fiscal year, calendar year.

Source: GRI (2022)

Reproductive cancers: Cancers that start in the organs related to reproduction (e.g., cervical, vaginal and vulvar cancers).

Reskilling: training people to do a different job.



Resilience: the capacity of a system to deal with change and continue to develop.

Note: A system may refer to such as an individual, a forest, a city or an economy.

Source: SRC (2015)

Responsible business conduct: Companies' efforts to integrate social, environmental and ethical aspects into their decision-making and business operations.

Source: EU (n.a.d)

Responsible lobbying principles/ethical lobbying principles: Principles ensuring lobbying is transparent, accountable, consistent, legitimate and promote public interest.

Responsible Corporate Advocacy: Political engagement that addresses the needs of both shareholders and stakeholders, balancing the economic, environmental, and social imperatives that a company is subject to.

Source: WRI (n.a.)

Responsible investment: considering environmental, social and governance issues when making investment decisions and influencing companies or assets (known as active ownership or stewardship).

Source: PRI (n.a. a)

Responsibility to respect human rights: The responsibility of a company to avoid infringing on the human rights of others and to address negative impacts with which it may be involved, as set out in the UN Guiding Principles.

Source: UN (2011)

Rights holders/Rights-holders: Individuals or social groups that have particular entitlements in relation to specific duty-bearers.

Note 1: In general terms, all human beings are rights holders under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948).

Note 2: A human rights-based approach does not only recognize that the entitlements of rights holders need to be respected, protected and fulfilled, it also considers rights holders as active agents in the realization of human rights and development – both directly and through organizations representing their interests.

Source: UNESCWA (n.a.)

Salient human-rights issues: Those human rights that are at risk of the most severe negative impacts through a financial institution's activities or business relationships.

Note: Salient human-rights issues vary from company to company.

Scope 1/Scope 1 emissions: Direct GHG emission greenhouse gas emission from sources owned or directly controlled by the organisation.

Source: ITU (2023b) - based on GHGP (2004) and ISO (2022).

Scope 2/ Scope 2 emissions: Indirect GHG emission due to greenhouse gas emission from the generation of purchased electricity, heat, cooling or steam consumed by the organisation.

Source: ITU (2023b) - based on GHGP (2004) and ISO (2022).

Scope 3/ Scope 3 emissions: Indirect GHG emission that is a consequence of the organisation's activities but arises from sources that are not owned or directly controlled by the organisation.

Note: Scope 3 emissions include all attributable value chain GHG emissions not included in Scope 1 emissions or Scope 2 emissions.

Source: ITU (2023b) - based on GHGP (2004) and ISO (2022).



Secondary carer: The person with secondary responsibility for caring for a child, supplementing the role of the primary carer, who bears greater responsibility for looking after their needs.

Note: The secondary carer is often the biological father but can be someone else e.g. in case of adoption or same-sex parents. However, as fathers are usually the secondary carers, secondary carer leave is often referred to as 'paternity leave'.

Security incident response team: A specialized group within a company responsible for managing and responding to cybersecurity incidents.

Note: This can be a Customer Incident Response Team (CERT), Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams (FIRST), Product Security Incident Response Team (PSIRT) or similar type of security incident response team

Senior executive (level): High-ranking member of the management of the organisation, such as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or an individual reporting directly to the CEO or the highest governance body.

Source: GRI (2022)

Senior management: Refers to senior officers or managers of an organization or corporation, reporting to the senior executive level.

Severity of an impact: The severity of an actual or potential negative impact is determined by its scale (i.e., how grave the impact is), scope (i.e., how widespread the impact is), and irremediable character (how hard it is to counteract or make good the resulting harm).

Note: In the context of human rights, scale means the gravity of the impact on the human right(s). Scope means the number of individuals that are or could be affected. Irremediability means the ease or otherwise with which those impacted could be restored to their prior enjoyment of the right(s).

Source: GRI (2022) – derived from OECD and UN – amended with note

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR): Rights for all to make choices regarding their own sexuality and reproduction, providing they respect the rights of others to bodily integrity.

Note: This includes the right to access information and services needed to support these choices and optimize health (e.g., contraception, family planning, abortion).

Small and medium-sized enterprises: businesses that maintains revenues, assets, or a number of employees below a certain threshold.

Note: Thresholds differ between countries, with number of employees often in the range of about 50-500.

Source: Investopedia (n.a.)

Small-scale producer: Farmers or fishers who operate on limited land or water resources

Note 1: This typically refers to less than one hectare to 10 hectares for farming or small fishing vessels.

Note 2: Small-scale producers manage their production activities mainly with family labour. They face structural constraints such as limited access to resources, technology, and markets, and often operate in both local and global markets.

Source: UN FAO (2022), UN FAO (n.a.)



Social dialogue: All types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy.

Note 1: Social dialogue can exist as a tripartite process, with the government as an official party to the dialogue or it may consist of bipartite relations only between labour and management (or trade unions and employers' organisations), with or without indirect government involvement.

Note 2: Social dialogue processes can be informal or institutionalised, and often it is a combination of the two.

Note 3: Social dialogue can take place at the national, regional or at enterprise level. It can be inter-professional, sectoral or a combination of these.

Social Impact Assessment (SIA): The processes of analysing, monitoring and managing the intended and unintended social consequences, both positive and negative, of planned interventions (policies, programs, plans, projects) and any social change processes invoked by those interventions.

Note: Its primary purpose is to bring about a more sustainable and equitable biophysical and human environment.

Social opportunities: Potential for individuals or society to gain from beneficial effects in the social domain.

Social protection: the set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability across the life cycle.

Note: This includes child and family benefits, maternity protection, unemployment support, employment injury benefits, sickness benefits, health protection, old-age benefits, disability benefits and survivors' benefits

Source: ILO (n.a. a)

Social risks: Potential for individuals or society to suffer from adverse effects in the social domain.

Social startup: A social startup is a newly established, market-oriented venture committed to solving cultural, environmental, and/or social issues. It combines elements of traditional startups with a focus on social impact. Seeks to implement scalable solutions to social problems.

Stakeholder: Individual or group that has an interest that is affected or could be affected by the organisation's activities

Note: Examples: business partners, civil society organisations, consumers, customers, employees and other workers, governments, local communities, non-governmental organisations, shareholders and other investors, suppliers, trade unions, vulnerable groups.

Source: GRI (2022) – amended from OECD

Stakeholder engagement/consultation: an ongoing process of interaction and dialogue between a company and its stakeholders that enables the company to hear, understand and respond to their interests and concerns, including through collaborative approaches.

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs): Diseases or infections that are commonly spread by sexual activity (e.g., HIV/AIDS).

Note: This term is often used interchangeably with 'Sexually transmitted infections'

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs): See 'Sexually transmitted diseases'.

Stewardship: The use of influence by institutional investors to maximise overall long-term value including the value of common economic, social and environmental assets, on which returns and clients' and beneficiaries' interests depend.

Source: PRI (n.a. b)



Stewardship policy: A stewardship policy is a policy related to the stewardship of an organisation.

Source: PRI (n.a. b)

Strategy: A general plan or defined set of priorities outlining a desired outcome.

Note: A strategy is focused on what to do rather than how to do it and as such gives the intended direction.

Supplier: Entity upstream from the company (i.e., in the company's supply chain), which provides a product or service that is used the organisations operation or in the development of the organisation's own products or services

Note 1: Examples brokers, consultants, contractors, distributors, franchisees, home workers, independent contractors, licensees, manufacturers, primary producers, subcontractors, wholesalers

Note 2: This is broadly defined as tier 1 and beyond, including subcontractors.

Note 3: A supplier can have a direct business relationship with the organisation (often referred to as a first-tier supplier) or an indirect business relationship, including subcontractors.

Source: GRI (2022) - amended

Supply chain: all suppliers connected to a company through a direct or indirect business relationship.

Note: See also 'Supplier'

Sustainability: Meeting the world's needs of today and tomorrow by creating systems that allow us to live well and within the limits of our planet.

Source: EEA (2023)

Sustainable development (global): Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

Note: The terms 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development' are often used interchangeably

Source: UN (1987)

Target: a specific, measurable, time-bound, and often science-based objective, whose attainment will contribute to achieving or progressing a desired outcome.

Note: A target is set against a baseline.

Target year: A specific year set as a goal or deadline for achieving a particular objective, milestone, or plan.

Tax jurisdiction: country or territory with autonomous taxing powers similar to a country

Source: GRI (2019)

Taxonomy (for sustainable finance): Set[s] of criteria which can form the basis for an evaluation of whether and to what extent a financial asset can support given sustainability goals.

Note: Its purpose is to provide a strong signal to investors, and other stakeholders, and assist their decision making – by identifying the type of information investors need to assess the sustainability benefits of an asset and to classify an asset based on its support for given sustainability goals.

Source: BIS (2021)

Third-party: an individual or entity that is involved in a transaction but is not one of the principals and has a lesser interest.

Note: Third parties can include e.g. government organizations, courts, or other private parties (e.g., a company, an NGO, an individual person).

Source: Investopedia (n.a.) – amended with note



Trade association: An organisation that supports companies and employers of a in a particular business or trade and promote their common interest.

Note: Trade associations are also referred to as industry trade group, business association, sector association or industry body.

Transition plan: a time-bound action plan that clearly outlines how an organisation will pivot its existing assets, operations, and entire business model towards a trajectory that aligns with a predefined outcome.

Transparency report: Statement issued by companies disclosing data requests and records.

Under-represented group/ underrepresented social group: group of individuals who are less represented within a subset (e.g., a body or committee, employees of an organisation) relative to their numbers in the general population, and who therefore have less opportunity to express their economic, social, or political needs and views

Note 1: Under-represented social groups may include minority groups.

Note 2: The groups included under this definition depend on the organisation's operating context and are not uniform for every organisation.

Source: GRI (2022)

Upskilling: teaching workers new skills.

UN Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs): A set of principles offering guidance to business on how to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community.

Note: Established by UN Women and UN Global Compact, the WEPs are informed by international labour and human rights standards and grounded in the recognition that businesses have a stake in, and a responsibility for, gender equality and women's empowerment. The WEPs are a primary vehicle for corporate delivery on gender equality dimensions of the 2030 agenda and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Source: UN Women (n.a.)

Universal design: the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design

Note: In the case of information technology, products that are universally designed are accessible to and usable by people with a wide variety of characteristics, including different types of disabilities. These products are often designed to eliminate or minimize the need for assistive technologies. At the same time, they are compatible with common assistive hardware and software devices (DO-IT Center, 2022).

Source: UD Project (2024)

Upstream: Processes and impacts associated with the production of a company's products or services and the supply needed for the company's operation.

Usability: the extent to which a system, product or service can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction in a specified context of use

Note: As people with disabilities are not always included in usability tests, many products that perform well in usability tests are not accessible to users with disabilities.

Source: ISO (2018b)



User information: Any data that is connected to an identifiable person or may be connected to such a person by combining datasets or utilizing data-mining techniques. User information may be either collected or inferred.

Note 1: User information refers to any data that documents a user's characteristics and/or activities. This information may or may not be tied to a specific user account.

Note 2: User information includes, but is not limited to, personal correspondence, user-generated content, account preferences and settings, log and access data, data about a user's activities or preferences collected from third parties either through behavioural tracking or purchasing of data, and all forms of metadata. User information is never considered anonymous except when included solely as a basis to generate global measures (e.g. number of active monthly users). For example, the statement, 'Our service has 1 million monthly active users,' contains anonymous data, since it does not give enough information to know who those 1 million users are.

Source: RDR (2020) - amended

Users with disabilities [in the context of using a product or service]: users of a company's products and services experiencing any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to use the product or the service.

Usually excluded groups: Groups that are often lacking proportional access to good services.

Value chain: The range of activities carried out by an organisation, and by entities upstream and downstream from the organisation, to bring the organisation's products or services from their conception to their end use.

Note 1: The concept includes upstream suppliers as well as direct and indirect downstream business relationships.

Note 2: Entities upstream from the organisation (e.g. suppliers) provide products or services that are used in the development of the organisation's own products or services. Entities downstream from the organisation (e.g. distributors, customers) receive products or services from the organisation. The value chain includes the supply chain.

Source: GRI (2021)

Violence and harassment: A range of unacceptable behaviours and practices that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm.

Note: This potentially covers physical abuse, verbal abuse, bullying and mobbing, sexual harassment, threats and stalking, work-related communications, including those enabled by ICT.

Vulnerable groups: Group of individuals with a specific condition or characteristic (e.g., economic, physical, political, social) that could experience negative impacts as a result of an organisation's activities more severely than the general population.

Note: Vulnerable group include for example: children and youth; elderly persons; ex-combatants; HIV/AIDS-affected households; human rights defenders; indigenous peoples; internally displaced persons; migrant workers and their families; national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities; persons who might be discriminated against based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics (e.g. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex); persons with disabilities; refugees or returning refugees; women.

Source: (GRI, 2021)



Water stewardship: The use of water in ways that are socially equitable, environmentally sustainable, and economically beneficial.

Note: Water stewardship can be adopted by businesses, through corporate water stewardship, as well as by growers, communities, and others. Ultimately, stewardship is a tool to address these critical water challenges and drive sustainable water management.

Women-owned: Businesses that are 51% owned, managed and unconditionally controlled run by one or more women for both long-term decision-making and the day-to-day management and administration of the business operations, along with complete independence from non-women-owned businesses

Worker: an individual performing work for a company, regardless of the existence or nature of any contractual relationship with that company.



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