

6th Regional Integrity Week – Alliance for Integrity

Mainstreaming Business Integrity with Human Rights: reflections and perspectives for a new regional agenda

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Thursday, 28 October 2021, 14h00 GMT -5/16h00 GMT -3

Summary:

The closing event of the Sixth Regional Integrity Week started with a message on how a business integrity programme can impact on the human rights of a company's stakeholders. The panelists then had the opportunity to discuss the following questions: “How to ensure that acts of corruption in the company or in its supply chain do not violate human rights?; How to incorporate a human rights approach to compliance and business integrity programmes?; Are there good practices in companies at the regional or global level that can be mentioned?”. Finally, the event culminated with a relay visit to Ecuador and the launch of the communication campaign of the Alliance for Integrity's Advisory Group in Ecuador.

Main challenges

- A challenge in implementing human rights in business is to avoid elements such as negligence, carelessness, recklessness and non-compliance.
- Another challenge observed is the lack of awareness of how an act of corruption can directly or indirectly violate human rights.
- Sometimes the way to become aware of how corruption impacts on human rights is through tragedies or scandals. Often one does not realise until a bridge falls down, for example, to begin to realise that the right to life is a human right that must be protected.
- Human rights are affected by corruption on a daily basis. Corruption undermines institutional frameworks and democracy, increasingly affecting vulnerable sectors.
- One of the challenges is to raise awareness among public entities and suppliers that public procurement must be transparent, and that, above all, it serves to guarantee citizens' rights.
- A systemic vision is needed. Compliance should carry due diligence transversally in the process of strengthening a culture of integrity.

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Best practices shared

- Transparency is one of the main strategies to fight corruption, with an emphasis on human rights.
- A key element to achieve positive results is to have excellent stakeholder relations management.
- Corporate governance is key to manage the preventive approach to fight corruption and it is one of the essential conditions to strengthen the synergy between transparency, integrity, anti-corruption and human rights.
- Compliance programmes are very good tools in organisations to ensure the protection of human rights, as they can be in all types of companies, either small, medium or large.
- There is a call to action that all international organisations are currently calling for, and that is not only to talk about integrity programmes with a focus on human rights but also to implement them effectively in practice.

Future recommendations

- It is necessary to foresee policies within organisations, and for these to be accompanied by programmes that allow companies to really demonstrate the impact they generate on all their stakeholders.
- The companies of the future are called upon to add value to society, and this is achieved by having a positive impact. Companies must be aware that they can achieve this positive impact through their operations.
- An organisation's integrity programme should provide for human rights because integrity goes beyond human rights and seeks to generate a positive impact on society.
- In the context of the pandemic, there is a need for joint action and commitment not only from the private sector but also from the public sector in terms of integrity and transparency with a focus on the protection of human rights.
- Prevention and co-responsibility are two key words, it is necessary to work in a coordinated and collaborative mood. We need to move from an individual vision to a collective vision.
- A collective construction of public procurement processes is needed that involves all areas: public sector, private sector and civil society.
- For this agenda to work, it requires an enabling context and converging discourses. It is necessary to connect international cooperation agendas with international trade and competitiveness. The Alliance for Integrity seeks to keep the pace to foster this kind of cooperation and synergic work.