Scaling Up Action
on Human Rights

Operationalizing the UN Guiding
Principles on Business and Human Rights

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Why this issue brief?

To encourage more companies to take action on operationalizing the UN Guiding Principles (UNGPs) by:

➢ Building an **understanding** of the current state of play amongst corporations

➢ Highlighting common **barriers** faced in implementing UNGPs

➢ Sharing **solutions** tried and tested by WCBSD members

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Process

The issue brief builds on three activities:

➢ **Member survey** – to understand the current state of play within the WBCSD membership

➢ **Member interviews** – to understand challenges encountered & solutions being implemented

➢ **Member workshop** – to enable "learning by sharing" and to identify common challenges & practices

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Shift
Putting Principles into Practice

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21 contributing companies

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What do the UN Guiding Principles mean for business?

➢ **Policy commitment:** adopted at the highest levels of the company, and embedded across and throughout the business enterprise

➢ **Human rights due diligence**: identifying, assessing, preventing and mitigating actual and potential human rights impacts on stakeholders

➢ **Remedy:** establishing or participating in appropriate mechanisms and processes to provide a remedy to affected stakeholders that may have suffered harm, where the company has caused or contributed to that harm

➢ **Using their leverage:** to encourage and incentivize their business relationships throughout the value chain to meet these expectations

➢ **Meaningful stakeholder engagement:** throughout all of these processes, engaging meaningfully with those stakeholders who may be adversely affected by the company's activities
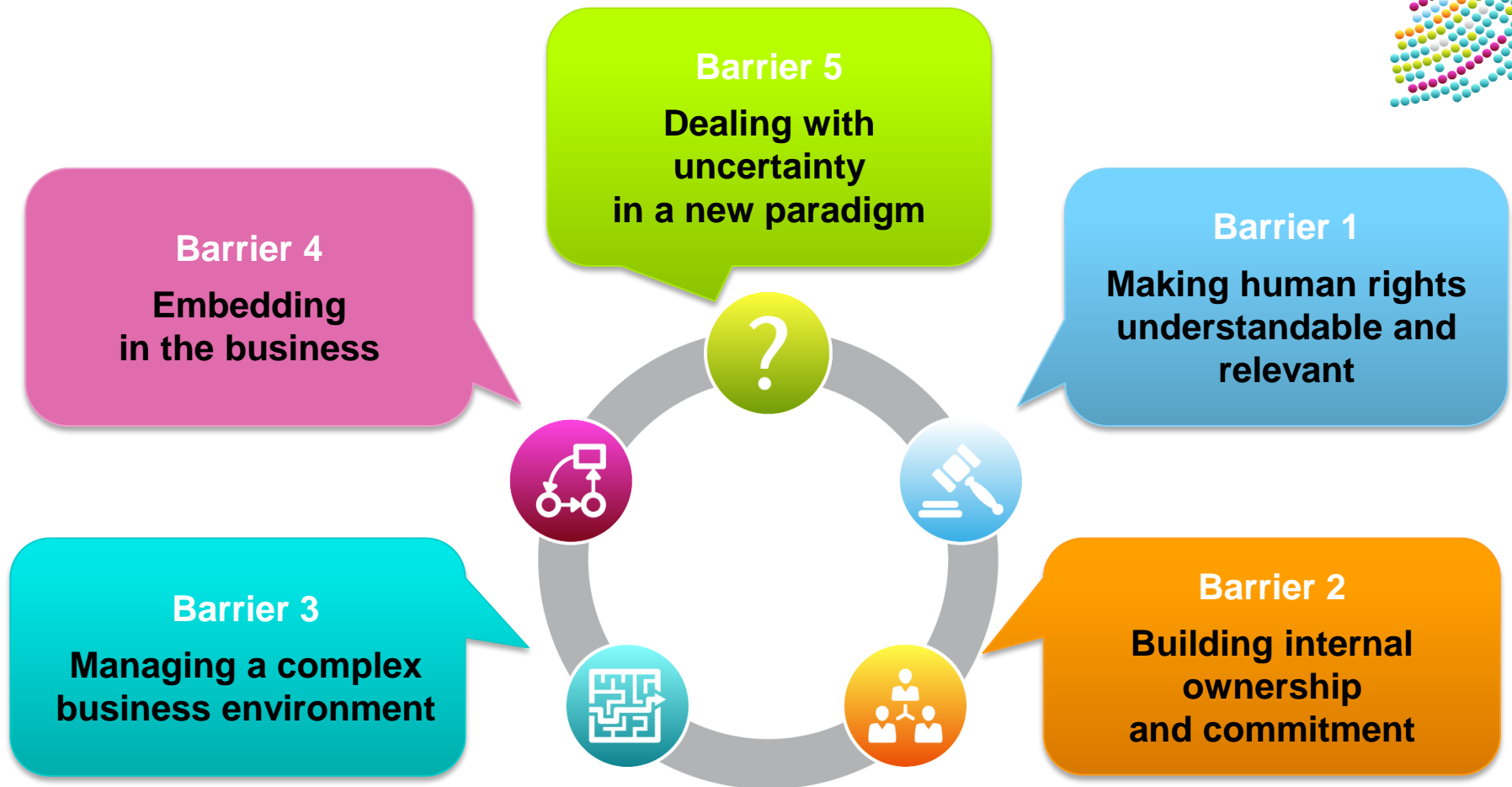
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UN Guiding Principles: business case

➢ **Meet growing expectations** of investors, business partners, and governments

➢ **Respond** to the growing risk of reputational harm

➢ **Avoid** the commercial costs involved in human rights failures

➢ **'Do the right thing'** and ensure that their social footprint is aligned with core corporate values

➢ **Seize the opportunity** to differentiate from competitors

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5 key barriers for companies

Barrier 5

Dealing with uncertainty in a new paradigm

Barrier 4

Embedding in the business

Barrier 1

Making human rights understandable and relevant

Barrier 3

Managing a complex business environment

Barrier 2

Building internal ownership and commitment

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Tried and tested solutions

Barrier 1

Making human rights understandable and relevant

- Translate human rights into accessible language
- Make the business case
- Leverage a crisis

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Tried and tested solutions

Barrier 2

Building internal ownership and commitment

- Assign responsibility and create a mandate

- Leverage the policy commitment process

- Link human rights to internal strategic priorities

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Tried and tested solutions

Barrier 3

Managing a complex business environment

- Map human rights risks and impacts
- Prioritize where necessary and learn by doing
- Understand the supply chain

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Tried and tested solutions

Barrier 4

Embedding in the business

- Understand the business of the business
- Build on existing approaches
- Share responsibility across the organization

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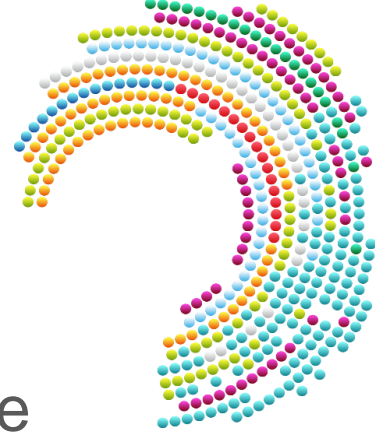# Tried and tested solutions

Barrier 5

Dealing with uncertainty in a new paradigm

- Engage a critical friend
- Communicate progress and challenges
- Collaborate to address gray areas
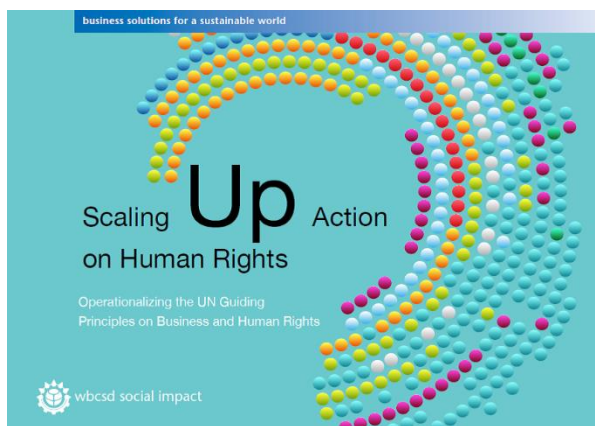
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The road ahead

➢ **Advocate** for company action to prevent, mitigate and address human rights impacts – importance of UN Guiding Principles

➢ **Connect** human rights more strongly to the wider sustainability agenda lined out under WBCSD's Action2020 platform

➢ **Facilitate** practical engagement of companies through knowledge exchange and site visits

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More information

Download the issue brief in pdf format at:

www.wbcsd.org/social-impact.aspx

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