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► **Sustainable Procurement Partnership:**

An industry-wide initiative and case studies of SMEs on responsible business conduct



Sustainable Procurement Partnership:

An industry-wide initiative and case studies of SMEs
on responsible business conduct

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► Introduction

This compilation of case studies was prepared as part of the “Building Responsible Value Chains in Asia through the Promotion of Decent Work in Business Operations (Phase II)” project, implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) with support from the Government of Japan (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry). The programme aims to foster an enabling environment for the realization of decent work by systematically supporting enterprises’ compliance with national laws and respect for the principles of international labour standards and by promoting cooperation between government, workers and employers to address structural challenges.

In this effort, the Sustainable Procurement Partnership (SPP),¹ led by the Japan Electronics and Information Technology Industries Association (JEITA), an industry association for the digital industry, has been supported through the cooperation of the ILO and the Japan Federation of Labour and Social Security Attorney’s Associations (Japan *Sharoushi* Federation). The electrical and electronics industry is supported by many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and the SPP is an initiative to promote responsible business conduct throughout the supply chain. Through the SPP, large “downstream” enterprises (those that deliver final products to consumers) support “upstream” SMEs (those that supply raw materials), aiming to raise the overall response level of the industry. This initiative has created a way for SMEs to participate, drawing on their own experiences and learning, and has become a model for promoting responsible business conduct across the entire industry’s supply chain.

This collection of case studies provides examples of SMEs participating

1 JEITA Sustainable Procurement Partnership (<https://home.jeita.or.jp/csr/spp/>).

in the industry-led SPP initiative. We hope that the lessons learned on responsible business conduct will be widely shared, leading to further initiatives in the value chain, both domestically and internationally. We also hope that this collection of case studies will help strengthen respect for international human rights and labour standards, including the fundamental principles and rights at work and the uptake of the ILO's Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration), as well as strengthen cooperation among stakeholders.

Nozomi Tomita

Director

ILO Office for Japan

► Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the enterprises that graciously agreed to be interviewed in the preparation of this collection of case studies. We also received invaluable guidance and support from the JEITA secretariat and other related organizations and enterprises. We wish to express our sincere appreciation for their contributions, which enabled us to successfully compile this collection of case studies.

SPP participating companies (in alphabetical order):

Adtek Fuji. Co., Ltd.; Aono Industrial Co., Ltd.; Asahi Sangyo Co., Ltd.; Data Service Co., Ltd.; Enzan Factory Co., Ltd.; Fuji Automation Co., Ltd.; Fuji Seira Co., Ltd.; Hokkoh Shoji Co., Ltd.; Matsushiro Industrial Co., Ltd.; Nikkato Corporation; Nikko Denki Tsushin Co., Ltd. (NDTC); Shikokutosoukougyou Co., Ltd.; Tateyama Machine Co., Ltd.; Waka Manufacturing Co., Ltd.

SPP operating member companies:

NEC Corporation; Panasonic Group; Tanaka Precious Metal Group Co., Ltd.; Toshiba Corporation; Nikon Corporation; Fujitsu Limited; Mitsubishi Electric Corporation; Yokogawa Electric Corporation.

► Messages

Japanese enterprises have been actively expanding internationally as their supply chains spread across borders. Meanwhile, the global importance of initiatives related to “business and human rights” has been growing, making such efforts an essential element for Japanese enterprises operating internationally.

In response to these international trends, the Government of Japan released the “Guidelines on Respecting Human Rights in Responsible Supply Chains²” in 2022 and has been supporting enterprises in their voluntary initiatives.

While the efforts of Japanese enterprises have been steadily advancing, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) continue to face challenges such as limited human resources and expertise. Against this backdrop, the establishment of the Sustainable Procurement Partnership (SPP) by the Japan Electronics and Information Technology Industries Association (JEITA), through collaboration between large corporations and SMEs, is a highly meaningful and significant initiative.

We hope that the circle of industry-wide collaboration will continue to expand to address sustainability issues that are difficult for individual enterprises to tackle alone. We also expect that strengthened cooperation across corporate boundaries will contribute to enhancing the corporate value of participating companies and further promote respect for human rights throughout the entire supply chain.

Hideaki Fujisawa

*Director-General, International Economic Affairs Department
Deputy Director-General for Business and Human Rights Policy
Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Japan*

2 The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Policy Promotion for the Implementation of Japan's National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, *Guidelines on Respecting Human Rights in Responsible Supply Chains*, September 2022, <https://www.meti.go.jp/policy/economy/business-jinken/guidelines/provisionalenglishtranslation.pdf>

Our association includes member companies spanning the entire digital industry – from upstream sectors such as electronic materials and component devices to downstream areas, including electronic devices and solution services. Many of our member companies operate globally. As a result, we were among the first to recognize the growing importance of corporate social responsibility. Since 2006, prior to the publication of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), we have been developing guidelines to promote responsible business conduct throughout the supply chain, while also working on training and raising awareness. In promoting responsible business conduct, many enterprises face the challenge of fostering a shared understanding and communication with their suppliers is not always easy. The association's SPP activities are designed to address these challenges directly through dialogue and collaboration between large enterprises, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and external experts. We hope this initiative will serve as a model for building effective engagement throughout supply chains across all industries. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to this collection of case studies.

Yuichi Sekiya

*Executive Vice President, Director and Secretary General
Japan Electronics and Information Technology Industries Association*

Since it is essential to promote business and human rights and respect for human rights beyond the boundaries of any country or industry, the Japan Federation of Labour and Social Security Attorney's Associations has recently expressed its support for the JEITA SPP initiative. As part of this cooperation, the federation dispatched business and human rights promotion labour and social security attorneys (BHR *Sharoushi*), who had been trained with technical support from the ILO Office for Japan.

Labour and social security attorneys (*Sharoushi*) are professionals in labour management, as well as Japanese labour and social insurance laws and regulations, a major component of business and human rights. There are currently approximately 46,000 *Sharoushi* across Japan. Since the establishment of the *Sharoushi* system in 1968, *Sharoushi* have worked closely with many enterprises, particularly SMEs. They have contributed to expanding the application of Japan's labour and social security systems, supporting the realization of decent work and improving work environments for workers and other stakeholders. They have played a catalytic role in increasing social inclusion and creating a virtuous socio-economic cycle.

We hope that this initiative will contribute to a brighter future for Japan's electronic information industry. Furthermore, by providing our expertise as *Sharoushi*, we intend to continue our efforts to help create a more virtuous cycle within the supply chain.

Masakiyo Wakabayashi

President

*Japan Federation of Labour and Social Security Attorney's Associations
(Japan Sharoushi Federation)*

The ILO supports governments, workers and employers in advancing decent work, including by promoting responsible business conduct based on international standards such as the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration), and ensuring that global supply chains contribute to decent work. It also supports enterprises becoming sustainable by aligning their corporate policies and practices with these principles so that their operations and supply chains contribute to decent work and inclusive growth. By translating the guidance of the MNE Declaration and the fundamental principles and rights at work into practice, the SPP initiative shows a practical way in which SMEs can adopt responsible business practices. It highlights common challenges faced by SMEs, such as limited capacity, resources and awareness, and how they can be addressed through active engagement, peer learning and collaboration with multinational enterprises. Such dialogue fosters mutual understanding, drives collective improvements, and accelerates the implementation of responsible business conduct and human rights due diligence for decent work. As a promising example of collaboration in Japan's digital industry, this initiative can inspire other sectors as it provides a practical model to foster sustainable, responsible business practices and decent work for all.

Githa Roelans

Unit Head

Multinational Enterprises and Responsible Business Conduct Unit

International Labour Organization

1

What is the Sustainable Procurement Partnership (SPP)?



► What is the Sustainable Procurement Partnership (SPP)?

How and why the initiative began

The electrical and electronics industry involves a vast and complex supply chain that calls for responsible business conduct and respect for human rights throughout the industry. However, it was not easy for individual large enterprises to reach out comprehensively to SMEs in their supply chains. They faced challenges in conducting human rights due diligence³ and gaining understanding. Against this backdrop, there was a need to build collaboration and engagement between large enterprises and SMEs to strengthen the industry's responsible business practices.

Interviews with both SMEs and large enterprises confirmed that it would be effective to take an industry-wide approach to actions that should be implemented by all enterprises, such as formulating human rights policies. This led to the establishment of the SPP as a platform for dialogue and collaboration. JEITA's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Committee has been promoting human resource development through the formulation of guidelines and survey formats, the development of tools, and training and awareness-raising. The SPP aims to build on these activities to translate learning into practice and implement responsible business conduct.

SPP overview

The SPP is a cross-industry platform that connects large JEITA member companies in the electrical and electronics industry with SMEs in their

³ "Human rights due diligence" refers to the process by which an enterprise identifies, prevents and mitigates adverse human rights impacts within the enterprise itself, its group companies and its suppliers; evaluates the effectiveness of its responses; and explains and discloses information about how it has addressed these impacts.

supply chains. Large enterprises work together to provide capacity-building and awareness-raising for SMEs, offer practical support and create opportunities for dialogue and collaboration, with the goal of building a sustainable supply chain for the entire industry.

The characteristics of the SPP are as follows:

1. It is an initiative carried out through industry-wide collaboration that goes beyond the individual enterprise.
2. It places emphasis on engagement between SMEs and large enterprises across the value chain.
3. It is an initiative that has been developed in collaboration with external experts (Japan *Sharoushi* Federation and ILO Office for Japan).

The SPP provided support for the formulation of human rights policies in the fiscal year 2024 and is scheduled to provide support for the implementation of human rights due diligence and the establishment of a grievance mechanism in the fiscal year 2025. The support process includes a management study meeting to encourage commitment from executives, workshops for practitioners from the participating companies to learn about responsible business conduct and business and human rights, individual consultations with a BHR *Sharoushi* to support the formulation of human rights policies tailored to each company's situation, and a final closing meeting in which each company presents its initiatives. The participating SMEs come from across Japan and range from small enterprises with fewer than ten employees to those with over 300. They represent a diverse range of industries, extending beyond electronic component manufacturers to software and other related sectors.

Common challenges among SMEs and SPP outcomes

The SMEs participating in the SPP have been committed to creating supportive working environments for their employees. However, they were

not familiar with the concepts of responsible business conduct or business and human rights, and responding to questionnaires on business human rights/responsible business conduct and surveys on conflict minerals requested by customer enterprises alone did not necessarily lead to sufficient understanding or effective implementation of business human rights/responsible business conduct. Through seminars and individual consultations, the SPP helps SMEs build a foundation for action by clarifying the connection between their efforts to create a supportive working environment or their corporate philosophy and the above-mentioned concepts and identifying points that need to be strengthened in light of international standards. Because responsible business conduct requires real understanding by top management, the management study meetings, which were held in November 2024, were an effective first step. SMEs were also confirmed to have the advantage of being able to leverage their close human connections and agility to quickly incorporate what they have learned into their own systems.

In addition, collaboration between large enterprises and SMEs created opportunities to understand each other's challenges and situations and to share perceptions of the issues necessary for building engagement. Some participants said that, while it was difficult to exchange views frankly in one-on-one business interactions that directly tied to a deal, this initiative gave them an opportunity to discuss human rights on an equal footing and deepen mutual understanding. The workshops facilitated peer learning and information-sharing among the enterprises and enabled them to take their initiatives forward by referring to case studies of other enterprises.

Looking ahead, enterprises can further strengthen responsible business conduct throughout supply chains by carrying out human rights due diligence and by engaging in meaningful dialogue with suppliers and business partners. The SPP plans to continue to provide such support beyond 2025 and promote initiatives in line with international standards.

Future outlook

The SPP began as a small-scale trial project with the involvement of 16 SMEs. Going forward, the aim is for the initiative to be sustained and developed into a comprehensive support scheme. By working collaboratively across the electronics industry, the SPP intends to establish a system in which large enterprises can provide effective and efficient support to their suppliers, thereby reducing the burden placed on SMEs to respond to multiple individual buyer requests.

Each SME operates under its own specific circumstances and has distinct needs that require the adoption of tailored approaches. It is expected that successful cases will be compiled and lessons learned will be shared so that each enterprise can find the approach that suits its own context. To achieve this, it is important to engage in continuous dialogue and collaboration through the SPP platform, which connects large enterprises and SMEs, drawing on the experience of each enterprise and the knowledge of external experts.

To encourage more SMEs to participate, it is essential for the whole industry to recognize that working together contributes to decent work and more efficient and effective development of a sustainable supply chain. Going forward, JEITA plans to publicize the outcomes of the SPP initiative and the benefits of participation, emphasizing both the value added for SMEs and the positive effects on the industry as a whole.

This collaborative model, where large enterprises, as major players in the industry, share the vision to strengthen responsible business conduct in the industry and engage enterprises across their supply chains, represents a promising approach that could be extended to other industries.

2

Responsible Business Practices by the SMEs



► Data Service Co., Ltd.

Communicating human rights policy internally: Fostering employee ownership

Main products and services: System development, business processing outsourcing (BPO) back-office solutions, etc.

Location: Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo

Number of employees: 264

Initiative background

In the past, the enterprise faced a number of issues involving mental health, staff turnover and harassment. It identified a lack of effective mechanisms for employee engagement and feedback as one of the root causes and recognized the need to create an environment where employees could take the initiative and have their voices heard. To address this, the enterprise decided to initiate efforts from a human rights perspective, including the development of a human rights policy and establishment of an external mental health consultation desk. At the same time, an increasing number of clients have been enquiring about the existence of a company human rights policy and associated initiatives during bids and business negotiations, which boosted the enterprise's motivation to pursue these efforts.

Process of developing our human rights policy

First, the executive and manager in charge of human rights conducted research into the human rights policies of other enterprises in the same industry and the initiatives they were taking. They then participated in a workshop held by a major business partner, where, together with other

SMEs, they learned about specific examples on how other enterprises formulated their policies and identified their company's human rights risks by making use of the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry's worksheet "[Reference Material on Practical Approaches for Business Enterprises to Respect Human Rights in Responsible Supply Chains](#)"⁴.

Based on these efforts, they developed a draft human rights policy internally and discussed it with the company president. Reflecting the president's comments, the company human rights policy identified "discrimination, safety and health, wages and working hours, and harassment" as priority areas – drawing on the human rights risks identified through the preceding risk identification process.

Positive changes and future outlook

The president explained the human rights policy to all employees. This served as a catalyst for conversations among employees; some expressed the view that the enterprise was "moving in a good direction" and some began to reflect on how human rights initiatives could be linked to the enterprise's internal challenges, such as mental health, resulting in small but positive changes among employees.

To ensure that the human rights policy is embedded throughout the enterprise, it is in the process of creating a cross-functional employee-led team to promote a deeper understanding of the human rights policy and incorporate it into their daily business processes. The enterprise also plans to maintain ongoing dialogue with workers' representatives and, drawing on this engagement and the work of the employee-led team, to revise its human rights policy.

Looking ahead, it also plans to make its human rights policy public and

⁴ Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, *Reference Material on Practical Approaches for Business Enterprises to Respect Human Rights in Responsible Supply Chains*, April 2023, https://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2023/0404_004.html

conduct human rights due diligence with its business partners in the supply chain and value chain, including partner enterprises.

Examples of responsible business conduct

To prevent long working hours, overwork and uneven workloads, the enterprise is updating its attendance management system to improve working-hour visibility and make human rights risks related to working conditions more transparent.

Recognizing that mental health is a critical issue, and in response to employee feedback, the enterprise has established an external mental health consultation desk and introduced a system for consultations with industrial physicians. This has resulted in an increase in consultations, which the enterprise views positively. Increased use of these channels helps reduce the burden on employees experiencing mental health challenges and at the same time enables a better understanding of the volume and nature of concerns raised by employees, enabling the enterprise to improve its internal systems. It is also strengthening its return-to-work programme to support employees returning from a leave of absence for mental health reasons.



Takashi Ogawa,
Manager, Systems Business Division

I believe it is important that company policies are clearly articulated and made visible. By clearly articulating the direction the company is taking, employees can align around a shared vision. This also enables us to clearly communicate and share that vision with incoming fresh graduates, mid-career hires and business partners. We are already engaged in employee-led activities, designed and driven by employees themselves, to reform our personnel system and organizational culture. I believe it is important to connect our human rights initiatives with these efforts, so that all employees can understand human rights initiatives and act with a sense of ownership. As someone involved in these initiatives on the ground, I am committed to ensuring that they are firmly embedded in practice.



Tetsuya Sakamoto,
President and CEO

I believe that enhancing the job satisfaction and well-being of our employees through human rights initiatives is important not only for our own company but also for the Japanese IT industry. For these initiatives to truly be embedded within the company, it is necessary that each and every employee feels a personal sense of ownership. I have a particularly strong desire to work closely with our employees on these efforts. However, to avoid a top-down approach, once I communicated our commitment to the human rights policy to all staff, I made a conscious decision to step back, keep dialogue open and play more of an enabling role behind the scenes. Although still small in number, some employees have developed a considerable sense of ownership. I hope that they will take on leadership roles to move forward with these initiatives. In order to expand the initiatives across our supply chain in the future, I will first ensure that the policy is embedded throughout the company. Then, I aim to ensure that each and every employee can build relationships with our partner companies as true partners based on the policy.



UNGPs:
16, 18, 29, 31



OECD Guidance:
1.1, 6.2



ILO MNE Declaration:
44

► Matsushiro Industrial Co., Ltd.

Incorporating human rights into existing systems

Main products and services: Electronic components, sheet metal coating

Location: Nagano City, Nagano Prefecture

Number of employees: 110

Initiative background

Recognizing that discrimination and harassment have had a negative impact on employee well-being and on a safe and respectful working environment, and that this in turn has prevented employees from fully realizing their abilities, the enterprise began actively promoting responsible business practices grounded in respect for human rights. A major impetus for this was its experience in establishing a consultation desk for discrimination and harassment, which enabled concerns to be identified and addressed and, as a result, contributed to reducing staff turnover and greater realization of employee potential.

Process of developing our human rights policy

Eight employees from each department met to identify risks related to human rights using the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry's "Reference Material on Practical Approaches for Business Enterprises to Respect Human Rights in Responsible Supply Chains⁵". Based on the worksheets attached to the reference material, the leaders focused on sections

5 Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, *Reference Material on Practical Approaches for Business Enterprises to Respect Human Rights in Responsible Supply Chains*, April 2023, https://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2023/0404_004.html

relevant to the enterprise's operations, such as manufacturing and metal products. Building on these sections, they further identified human rights risks by adding both past cases that had already been resolved and issues currently posing risks, including factory noise affecting relations with nearby residents, harassment and occupational safety and health. Through internal meetings, the enterprise communicated to employees that respect for human rights extends not only within the enterprise but also to its suppliers and the local community. Following prior individual preparation, the employees also engaged in discussions on human rights in the context of the enterprise's operations, sharing a common understanding that acts such as bullying, gender-based discrimination and workplace exclusion constitute human rights violations. By holding in-house dialogues in small groups and over multiple sessions, creating an environment where participants felt comfortable expressing their views on human rights issues related to the enterprise's operation, the number of participants increased and the circle of engagement expanded, and contributed to the gradual internal dissemination of the human rights policy.

Positive changes and future outlook

At the monthly enterprise-wide morning assembly, the president communicated the company's finalized human rights policy and anti-harassment policy. Following this, employees increasingly shared their views through the company's existing "Suggestions for Improvement (Kaizen suggestion)" system. The enterprise has operated this business-improvement suggestion system for all employees for 15 years, placing importance on "enabling anyone to submit any kind of suggestion". A dedicated committee meets once a month to review, compile and visually reflect the submitted suggestions. Suggestions that are reviewed and taken forward by the committee are highlighted with a yellow flower symbol and displayed where everyone can see them. The visibility of the system has earned employee trust, and the number of suggestions has grown from an initial 100 per year to approximately 3,200 today. Going forward, the enterprise

intends to continue using this suggestion system to gather on-the-ground feedback related to human rights and put forward effective preventive and corrective measures.

The enterprise also believes that establishing a human rights policy alone is not sufficient. It therefore plans to continuously communicate the intent of the human rights policy, which is to foster an environment where employees feel they are able to speak up when they need support and to increase opportunities for dialogue.

Examples of responsible business conduct

In addition to the above-mentioned suggestion system for operational improvements, the enterprise is taking steps to embed human rights considerations across different areas of its day-to-day operations. For example: (1) embedding the “Implementation of Human Rights Policy” into existing quality and environmental management systems; (2) integrating a human rights perspective into occupational safety and health practices by clarifying the significance of wearing protective equipment, and reflecting this perspective in training for new employees and in clearer and more accessible manuals; and (3) positioning the confirmation of conflict-free procurement ⁶ as a human rights issue within its procurement practices.

⁶ Conflict-free procurement refers to the process by which enterprises identify, assess and address risks that minerals used in their products may contribute to armed conflict, serious human rights abuses, or other adverse impacts, particularly in conflict-affected and high-risk areas.



Miyuki Kasuga,
Chief, General Affairs Department

I am responsible for the consultation desk. I strive to make it easier for people to seek consultation by responding as sincerely as possible and carefully facilitating communication so as to narrow the gap between the solution they hope for and what the company can provide. I have learned that the establishment and operation of the consultation desk have contributed to a decrease in staff turnover, which gives me a strong sense of motivation.



Yoshimasa Miyazawa,
President

I aim to improve the overall performance of the organization by leveraging the ownership and creativity of our employees. Our participation in the SPP enabled us to identify human rights risks regarding our employees and will help us confront human rights issues within the workplace going forward. I feel that we have entered a time in which enterprises must take proactive steps on human rights issues. We plan to accelerate our efforts, encouraging more human rights related suggestions, improving the working environment, and building a workplace where each person can develop their skills while engaging with others as human beings and without indifference.



UNGPs:
16



OECD Guidance:
1.1, 1.2



ILO MNE Declaration:
30, 43, 44

► Nikko Denki Tsushin Co., Ltd. (NDTC)

Implementing human rights initiatives with young employees: contributing to talent attraction

Main products and services: Systems business, products business, electronics manufacturing services, customer support and services

Location: Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo (Head Office), Yokohama Plant, Sapporo Branch, Fukuoka Sales Office

Number of employees: 101

Initiative background

Several years ago, the enterprise received Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) certification from Kanagawa Prefecture and created an SDG project team. The enterprise realized that young talent increasingly values corporate performance on SDGs and human rights, as it has already seen cases where employees chose to join the enterprise because they appreciated these initiatives. In light of this, the enterprise has begun business and human rights initiatives in a way that strengthens the existing SDG framework.

As an SME doing business with large enterprises, the company also recognized that addressing human rights issues would become indispensable in the future and aimed to secure a competitive advantage by taking early action.

Process of developing our human rights policy

Through SPP training, top management recognized the importance of addressing human rights issues. After sharing this understanding with the Board of Directors, the enterprise formed a cross-department business

and human rights team.

To assess the status of the enterprise's efforts, the team used the “[Business and Human Rights at Work Checklist](#)”⁷ (developed by the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and the ILO Office for Japan). The enterprise developed a human rights policy that reflects its unique characteristics rather than just relying on a generic template. Team members came from a wide range of roles and experience levels, from employees in management roles to employees in their second year, and they closely collaborated in developing a human rights policy.

After the policy was finalized, it was published both internally and externally. Employees were given a pocket-sized “human rights card”, containing the contents of the human rights policy, and training sessions were held to help ensure that all employees gained a basic understanding of the policy. In addition, the enterprise has begun preparations for human rights due diligence, such as developing questionnaires for business partners and selecting enterprises to which to distribute them.

Positive changes and future outlook

The enterprise has long maintained president-led, cross-departmental project teams that enable broad employee participation. By developing the human rights policy, collaboration emerged between the existing SDG team and the business and human rights team, creating synergies throughout the enterprise.

Discussions on human rights have spread beyond the team members and the term “human rights” has begun to appear in employees' daily conversations. Even employees who are not directly involved have begun to think, “what can I do?” and signs of behavioural changes are beginning to emerge among individual employees.

⁷ Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare of Japan-ILO, *Business and Human Rights at Work Checklist*, <https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/10500000/001511269.pdf>

Going forward, the enterprise plans to further integrate human rights into its corporate purpose and values. It plans to provide training for group companies and to hold regular meetings across the group to review progress. In addition, there is a growing recognition that “human rights are not just an internal issue of the enterprise”. The enterprise intends to reinforce the consideration of human rights within its existing surveys related to the SDGs and environmental/social responsibility, and to expand its approach across the supply chain, including overseas partner enterprises and business partners.

Examples of responsible business conduct

To create a supportive working environment, the enterprise regularly conducts employee surveys and uses the results to prioritize and implement improvement measures. Previous examples include the skill development opportunities and rewards scheme explained below.

To address harassment, the enterprise provides education and training to all members, including senior management, and has set up a contact point for consultations. To ensure accessibility, the enterprise also makes sure that staff members – including female staff – are available to handle consultations.

The enterprise also offers skill development opportunities to younger employees. It offers more than 200 recommended professional qualifications, supported by a rewards scheme. It has also introduced a mentoring system involving group companies and business partners, which connects younger employees with more experienced colleagues outside their direct reporting lines, thereby strengthening career development support.

By linking its efforts to develop skills and support the careers of younger employees with their participation in projects – including those related to the development of the human rights policy – and with existing cross-departmental project structures, the enterprise has seen changes in its internal culture and positive spillover effects on talent attraction.



Yuu Takahashi,
General Affairs Department

For people like me in the younger generation, a company's commitment to the environment and human rights is a key factor when deciding where to work. I also believe that these efforts strengthen credibility with other enterprises. Paying close attention to human rights, the environment and social situations and approaching them proactively can make it easier to take meaningful action. This is my second year with the company, and I belong to both the business and human rights team and the SDG team. I'm also responsible for creating posters to support internal communication and awareness-raising related to the human rights policy. In doing so, I focus on simple, easy-to-understand designs that are more likely to catch employees' attention.



Kazuo Yamanaka,
President

I hope that people will approach human rights not as something overly complicated, but with a mindset of taking small and practical steps. In day-to-day business operations, companies constantly encounter various challenges. Taking the first step in identifying human rights risks becomes easier by first identifying and organizing these business challenges and then considering how they relate to different human rights. Since our company's business is divided into four major areas, we receive a variety of opinions across divisions and these inputs provide valuable guidance for management in deciding the direction the company should take.



UNGPs:
16



OECD Guidance:
1.1



ILO MNE Declaration:
38

► Shikokutosoukougyou Co., Ltd.

Formalizing “barrier-free” initiatives through a human rights policy

Main products and services: Electrodeposition coating, baking coating, metal coating, screen printing, sheet metal processing, various welding processes

Location: Marugame City, Kagawa Prefecture

Number of employees: 115 (total of three companies)

Initiative background

The enterprise aims to create a barrier-free workplace – understood as an inclusive, and non-discriminatory environment – in which all employees can work on an equal footing, regardless of race, gender, employment status or physical differences. Measures include maintaining a non-discriminatory wage system, improving occupational safety and health facilities at factories by introducing measures to reduce heat-related risks (including investments to lower indoor temperatures, breathable workwear and the provision of drinking water), and providing company housing to reduce disparities related to employment status, place of origin or economic circumstances. By organizing and documenting these existing practices under the framework of business and human rights and responsible business conduct, the enterprise sought to ensure that they are clearly understood by all employees.

Process of developing our human rights policy

First, the president demonstrated his commitment to respecting human rights by initiating the process of developing a human rights policy as a top-level management decision. He made use of regular morning meetings attended by 13 participants, including section managers and chiefs

from each department and members of the health and safety committee. Through these meetings, they discussed employment regulations and views gathered through company-wide surveys and interviews with all employees and gradually shaped these into a concrete human rights policy.

Positive changes and future outlook

There has been a gradual increase in understanding that respect for human rights is not limited to harassment but includes a wide range of areas such as working environments and occupational safety and health, which is a positive change.

Through the SPP, the enterprise learned about practices to respect human rights implemented by other enterprises in the same industry across regions, which inspired the enterprise to further enhance its own efforts.

Examples of responsible business conduct

Even prior to the development of its human rights policy, the enterprise was implementing a range of initiatives to create a barrier-free workplace. For example, although parental leave is legally available to both men and women, it had not been widely recognized or utilized by most male employees. Therefore, the enterprise has taken top-down steps to create an environment that enables and encourages male employees to take parental leave. In addition, to prevent discrimination based on attributes such as gender or nationality, the enterprise has adopted a competency-based job evaluation system grounded in factors such as work responsibility, level of experience and relevant skills and licences.

Furthermore, for the enterprise to understand each employee's situation and create a better working environment, employees are invited to reflect on their personal growth and challenges, consider future directions, and share opinions and requests with the company. The president reviews all

the written inputs and then conducts interviews and adopts suggestions to improve the working environment.

As a result of these efforts, which correspond to key human rights priorities in the enterprise's human rights policy such as non-discrimination and respect for diversity, the enterprise has fostered a work environment where diverse employees can work with a sense of belonging. Many former technical intern trainees, and even their foreign-worker acquaintances, have expressed an interest in working in the enterprise. These efforts have also contributed to smoother recruitment overall, particularly in the hiring of new graduates.



**Surcahyana,
Painting Process Department**

I worked for this company as a technical intern until 2019, and I returned from Indonesia a few years ago as a Specified Skilled Worker (i). Everyone in the company is kind and helpful and easy to get along with. There is no discrimination between foreigners or Japanese employees. When I make mistakes, they tell me and teach me how to handle the situation. At the daily morning meetings, they remind us of safety, and we are provided with helmets and other protective equipment. I feel that I am working in a safe and secure environment.



Hiroaki Chikazawa,
President

What we must protect is “people”. We start with those who are closest – ourselves, our employees, our suppliers and our customers. When an employee raises a concern, we never turn them away. We always listen carefully to what they have to say, take their inputs seriously and then get back to them with an answer. We also believe that it is important not to treat the existence of any barriers as risks to be eliminated, but to engage in dialogue. I think it is essential that everyone, from the president to the employees, regardless of gender or race, can come together and speak openly with a shared spirit.



UNGPs:
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OECD Guidance:
1.1



ILO MNE Declaration:
30, 43

What is violence and harassment in the world of work?

The [ILO Violence and Harassment Convention](#)⁸, 2019 (No. 190⁹) is the first international treaty to recognize the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment. Together with its accompanying Violence and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 (No. 206¹⁰), it provides a common framework to prevent, remedy and eliminate such behaviours in the world of work.

Convention No. 190 provides the first international definition of violence and harassment in the world of work (Art. 1(1)(a)), which refers to a “range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm, and includes gender-based violence and harassment”. The Convention also defines gender-based violence and harassment (Art. 1(1)(b)) as: “violence and harassment directed at persons because of their sex or gender, or affecting persons of a particular sex or gender disproportionately, and includes sexual harassment”.

The Convention requires Member States to adopt an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach to prevent and address such behaviours and practices in the world of work. It sets out a common framework for preventing, addressing and eliminating violence and harassment, which envisages action on prevention, protection, enforcement, remedies, guidance, training and awareness-raising, including by requiring employers to take specific measures and take

8 ILO, *Violence and harassment in the world of work*, <https://www.ilo.org/topics-and-sectors/violence-and-harassment-world-work#convention>

9 ILO, C190 - *Violence and Harassment Convention*, 2019 (No. 190), https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C190

10 ILO, R206 - *Violence and Harassment Recommendation*, 2019 (No. 206), https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:R206

into account third parties as both victims and perpetrators.

Employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy working environment, by preventing, as far as reasonably practicable, any work-related risk to the safety and health of workers. Convention No. 190 and Recommendation No. 206 call on ratifying countries to adopt laws and regulations requiring employers to take appropriate steps commensurate with their degree of control to prevent violence and harassment in the world of work, including gender-based violence and harassment.

► Voices from SPP operating member companies



Taira Akiyama, Project Leader
Sustainable Procurement Partnership, Concept Study
Task Force, JEITA CSR Committee
(NEC Corporation)

I believe that the SPP provides a foundation for putting into practice a couple of important ideas, namely: (i) that “in response to the rapidly changing demands of society, not only large enterprises but also SMEs should not be left behind, and that, by advancing together as an entire supply chain”; (ii) “this collaborative effort will enhance the corporate value and business growth”. Engagement is important in this regard, and the SPP aims to serve as a bridge connecting large enterprises with SMEs. While the initial focus is to promote this initiative within the electrical and electronics industry, the challenge of building a sustainable supply chain is applicable to other industries as well. Therefore, we would ultimately like to expand it beyond our own industry.



Anna Shitoto, Assistant Project Leader,
Sustainable Procurement Partnership, Concept Study
Task Force, JEITA CSR Committee
(Panasonic Operational Excellence Co., Ltd.)

Large downstream enterprises in the electrical and electronics industry share the common problem of vast, complex supply chains. I was attracted by the SPP concept of raising the level of the industry as a whole and decided to join as a member. While JEITA member companies compete with one another from a business perspective, I believe that sustainability, including human rights, is not a competitive domain but rather an area where collaboration is highly effective. Since the capabilities of individual companies are limited, we hope that enterprises will continue to work together to advance these initiatives.



Haruka Kazumori, SPP Member
Sustainable Procurement Partnership, Concept Study
Task Force, JEITA CSR Committee
(Mitsubishi Electric Corporation)

Open information-sharing and collaboration between operating companies offer clear benefits, such as bringing in diverse perspectives and enabling the engagement of external experts in a single effort. Many participating companies also agreed that it was valuable to be able to exchange opinions with other SMEs. Creating a community through the SPP is highly beneficial and, by further strengthening communication between large and small enterprises in the future, it has the potential to play an even more active role in stakeholder engagement.



Emiko Shinohara and Saeko Mibe,
SPP members
Sustainable Procurement Partnership,
Concept Study Task Force, JEITA CSR
Committee (Toshiba Corporation)

We felt that taking action at the industry association level is particularly effective because it enables collaboration with external experts, which can be difficult for individual enterprises, and helps convey to SMEs in a convincing way that sustainability and human rights initiatives are a societal expectation. Given the great benefits of working as an industry association, we hope that other sectors will also consider collaborative efforts when they face common issues or share common ground.



**Ai Ajima and Satoshi Wakasugi,
SPP members
Sustainable Procurement Partnership,
Concept Study Task Force, JEITA CSR
Committee (Fujitsu Limited)**

As the SPP initiative continues to expand, we believe it will be an important step not only in raising human rights awareness across the entire electrical and electronics industry, but also for society as a whole and in aligning with international trends. It was inspiring to see the SME executives participating with such enthusiasm and actively exchanging ideas. Their enthusiastic participation would make a significant contribution to fostering a responsible supply chain throughout the industry. Some enterprises are already very proactive in their human rights efforts, whereas others are unsure where to begin. That is why we hope that enterprises will take advantage of the programmes offered by the SPP and take a firm first step.



From
the People of Japan

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