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Protecting Human Rights Defenders: Integrating Safeguards into Supply Chain Due Diligence

Business and Human Rights Centre

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Business and Human Rights Centre

Working with partners and allies across the globe to put human rights at the heart of business to deliver a just economy, shared prosperity, end human rights abuse



**Tracking impacts of 10,000
companies in 180 countries**

North-South Americas

Europe & Central Asia

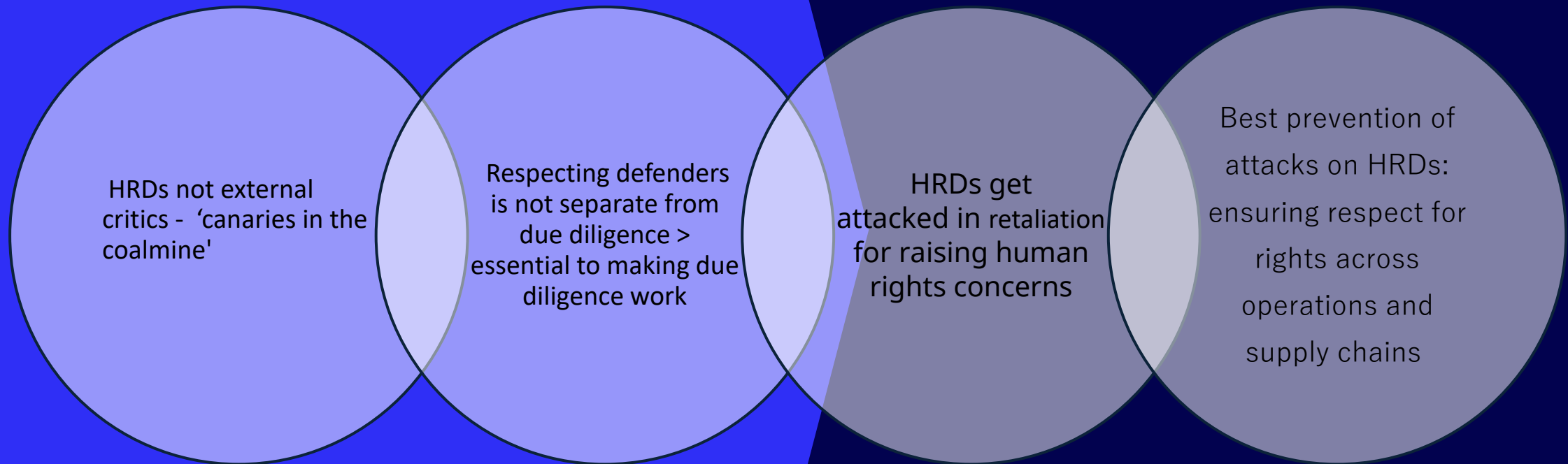
Africa & Middle East

Asia & Pacific

Defenders at risk: HRDs and global business

- **More than 6,400 reported attacks**, related to business, across 147 countries over 10 years (2015-24)
- 75% of attacks on **climate, land and environmental defenders**
- 21% of attacks against Indigenous Peoples (IPs only 6% of the world's population)
- More than **530 instances of Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs)** brought or initiated by private actors against HRDs raising concerns about business > SLAPPs pledge, Greenpeace lawsuit
- In 2024 alone, we tracked **660 attacks**

Respecting HRDs: why this should matter to business



Good news: Trend towards adoption of zero tolerance policies and guidance across all key sectors and industry associations – consumer goods, mining, oil & gas, renewables, tech

From Guidance to Implementation

CGF members supplementing policies with implementation guidance:

- Guidance / Standard Operating Procedures helpful to set out approach to implementation: conducive to internal and external communication & clarity on steps and responsibilities > CGF Best Practice note & Unilever implementation guidance as inspiration

Supplier engagement: from compliance to leverage and prevention:

- Attacks often stem from lack of meaningful stakeholder engagement, ongoing relationships with HRDs
- From firefighting to a proactive trust-building approach > at present, measures are often reactive
- Trust building – needs time, sensitivity

Grievance mechanisms: from remedial to protection tools & source of early warning:

- Grievance mechanisms (GMs) frequently **fail defenders** because they are unsafe / trigger retaliation
- Strong emphasis on: anonymity, trusted intermediaries, fast escalation where threats appear
- GMs = protective infrastructure: feeding into broader due diligence and prevention systems to avoid further escalation

More information: [Business & Human Rights Centre's Civic freedoms & HRDs hub](#)

Thank you

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