GLOBAL SOLIDARITY 01/25 Sustainability **Forward** News from the IGS

RBH NETWORK



DEAR READER,

We are excited to share the first news of 2025 with you. 2024 was a successful year for IGS and its partners, and we would like to present three very special highlights:

In April 2024, the joint conference with the Responsible Business Alliance (RBA) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) on due diligence in raw material supply chains took place in Berlin.

We are very proud that we were able to welcome Ms. Svenja Schulze, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, and Mr. Hubertus Heil, Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs.

Their participation shows us that the protection of human rights and the environment in global supply chains remains a key priority for the German government. A brief outlook: in May 2025, we will be organising a second conference together with RBA and BMZ - this time in Brussels. Stay tuned!



May 2024 marked the launch of the Mecanismo de Reclamación de Derechos Humanos, MRDH – a significant step towards ensuring a fair automotive supply chain in Mexico.

The MRDH is the first cross-company grievance mechanism to be established and is the result of an exceptional collaboration between businesses, trade unions, civil society, and national human rights institutes from Mexico and Germany.

Our RBH Network doubled in size in 2024!

Four new helpdesks have been established: Local suppliers in Tunisia, Mexico, Pakistan and Turkey can now also obtain information and advice on how best to prepare for due diligence obligations in accordance with German and European regulations. The RBH Network already comprises eight helpdesks and will continue to grow. The RBH in Bosnia, for example, is in preparation. We welcome all four helpdesks to the network and look forward to more!

BUILDING TRADE UNIONS' KNOW-LEDGE AROUND DUE DILIGENCE

Q&A with Alke Boessiger

- Deputy General Secretary, UNI Global Union, about the new Human Rights Due Diligence Centre for trade unions

(1) You are in the middle of the preparation phase for the Centre – what are your goals?

The purpose of this Centre is to enable trade unions to use emerging due diligence laws to prevent and remedy workers' rights abuses in global supply chains. Our goals are to build trade unions' knowledge around HRDD, support strategic interventions for effective due diligence in high-risk value chains, and advocate for effective due diligence, especially meaningful engagement with trade unions.

(2) Consultation workshops have recently taken place. Can you tell us a little bit more?

In September and November 2024, FES, UNI and the ITUC held 2-day workshops in Abidjan, Ivory Coast and Panama City. Around 50 trade unionists from 20 countries across Africa and the Americas were present. The participants gave valuable feedback on how the forthcoming Competence Centre can support them, such as: supporting union solidarity; establishing a global network to exchange good practices; advocating for effective due diligence involving unions; and building unions' technical knowledge on due diligence principles and legal instruments.

(3) Looking ahead, what are the next steps?

We are working closely with FES, DGB, and IndustriALL to set up a governance structure, define the Centre's core activities, identify high priority value chains, and start building a team to implement our activities. We are also in the middle of the outreach process to attract more donors to diversify our funding. At the same time, we're continuously building a network around the Centre through meetings and workshops with stakeholders. We look forward to launching the Centre publicly later in 2025.



Background information

With GIZ support, UNI Global Union, IndustriALL, Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and the German Trade Union Confederation DGB, are setting up a Human Rights Due Diligence Centre for trade unions, which is due to start work in 2025.

MORE INFORMATION:

UNI Global Union's website

LAUNCH OF THE ARABIC TRANSLATION OF THE OECD GUIDELINES

The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises are now available in Arabic. Launched at the Responsible Business Conduct in Egypt conference on January 16th in Cairo, this translation ensures a shared understanding of responsible business conduct in Standard Arabic, supporting sustainable economic growth and human rights due diligence.

The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises reflect the expectation from governments to businesses on how to act responsibly. They provide recommendations for responsible business conduct across key areas, such as climate change, biodiversity, technology, business integrity and supply chain due diligence.

The Arabic translation creates a standardized version for the region and was achieved through the OECD's MENA+T Programme, co-funded by IGS and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). It will strengthen responsible business practices in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, and Türkiye.

Background information

In line with IGS' objective to promote the implementation of HREDD in global supply chains, the OECD MENA+T Programme is supporting policy makers, businesses and stakeholders in five leading economies to boost responsible business conduct (RBC) by providing peer learning, policy advice and due diligence guidance.



Panel 1: Sustainable value chains in Egypt and beyond



Audience at Launch event



MORE INFORMATION:

Programme website
Launch event
Arabic translation



DATA & TRANSPARENCY

Credible and standardised data on environmental and social risks is a prerequisite for the implementation of due diligence.

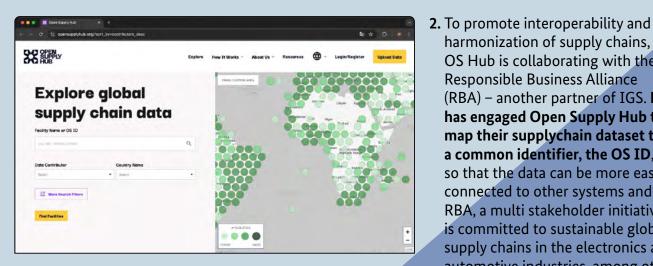
OBJECTIVES OF THE IGS

- Coordinated standards for social and environmental data are in place
- Suppliers have access to capacity building for the collection of sustainability data
- Publicly accessible data on supplier networks make supply chains more transparent

1 MILLION PRODUCTION LOCATIONS MAPPED AND A NEW COLLABORATION

We are happy to share two great updates from IGS grantee, Open Supply Hub:

1. At the end of 2024, Open Supply Hub celebrated the collective mapping of over 1 million locations from sectors and supply chains around the world – an important milestone for more transparent and collaborative supply chains.



harmonization of supply chains, OS Hub is collaborating with the Responsible Business Alliance (RBA) – another partner of IGS. RBA has engaged Open Supply Hub to map their supplychain dataset to a common identifier, the OS ID, so that the data can be more easily connected to other systems and tools. RBA, a multi stakeholder initiative, is committed to sustainable global supply chains in the electronics and automotive industries, among others, and operates the RBA online platform, on which RBA members and their suppliers can manage and exchange sustainability data.

Background information

RBH NETWORK

IGS supports the advancement and scaling of Open Supply Hub, which is powering the transition to safe and sustainable supply chains with the world's most complete, open and accessible map of global production. The dataset is used and populated by stakeholders across sectors and supply chains to open doors to new solutions, targeted investment, and more effective collaborations.

Through more transparent supply chains, human rights and environmental risks can be addressed more effectively and efficiently.



MORE INFORMATION:

Open Supply Hub's website **RBA** and OS Hub collaboration

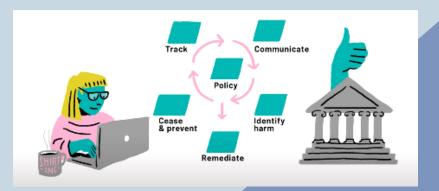
FAIR WEAR'S HRDD ACADEMY: SUPPORTING BRANDS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HRDD

Fair Wear has developed the HRDD Academy, an online learning platform that provides brands with the tools and guidance needed to implement human rights due diligence in accordance with the EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD). IGS supported Fair Wear in the development process of this platform.

The HRDD Academy empowers brands to meet human rights due diligence standards while improving working conditions for garment workers. The platform offers flexible, self-paced learning pathways, along with practical tools and expert guidance designed to address the unique challenges brands encounter in their supply chains.

By adopting a risk-based approach aligned with OECD guidelines, brands can take proactive steps to tackle issues and create meaningful, lasting change. Ready to lead with responsibility?

Join the growing community driving positive transformation in the industry. Contact join@academy.org to learn more about the onboarding process and fees.





Background information

The HRDD Academy is part of IGS and Fair Wear's collaboration dedicated to promoting shared responsibility, industry alignment, and impactful human rights due diligence practices. It aims to help brands implement OECD-aligned due diligence that focus on real change rather than a tick-box approach.

The effective implementation of HREDD depends on cooperation between purchasing and manufacturing companies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE IGS

- International frameworks promote partnership-based implementation of HREDD
- Shared responsibility models reduce risks in supply chains
- Tools for responsible purchasing practices are available



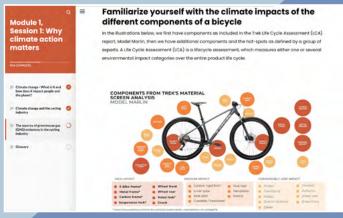
NEW TRAINING TO REDUCE EMISSIONS IN THE CYCLING INDUSTRY'S SUPPLY CHAINS

Eight cycling companies launched a free Climate Action Training for the Cycling Industry to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the industry's global supply chains. The project is co-facilitated by IGS and Shift Cycling Culture.

The web-based training aims at providing brands, suppliers, and manufacturers in the global cycling industry with foundational knowledge on how to contribute to a net zero cycling world. The bicycle companies – Accell, Canyon, Quality Bicycle Products, Rose, Schindelhauer, Schwalbe, Scott, and Trek – provided continuous feedback in the development process and supplemented it with their own case studies and materials.

The training is available in English as well as in Mandarin and Vietnamese. It allows learners to walk through the content in their own speed and do assignments according to their schedule and is also available as a tutor-guided course with local trainers from China and Vietnam.





Background information

The learning content is based on the Climate Action Training for the Fashion Industry and has been transferred and adapted from the fashion to the bicycle industry. This made it possible to build on existing approaches to decarbonizing supply chains and transfer learning experiences from one sector to another.

Impact

More than 500 learners are already participating in the online training. Tutor-guided trainings are already in full swing in China and will soon start in Vietnam.

MORE INFORMATION:

Climate Action Training Course
Shift Cycling Culture

"THIS PROGRAMME HAS SHIFTED MINDSETS"

Q&A Ngo Thi Hoai Thuong

- Head of HR Department at Scavi Hue, a supplier of lingerie and swimwear, about the ASH trainings in Vietnam

Why is it so important for Scavi to address Sexual harassment in the workplace?

Preventing sexual harassment is not only a legal obligation but also an essential step toward fostering a safe, respectful workplace. We have taken steps to prevent sexual harassment through a series of training. We have also established grievance mechanisms and investigation procedures, as well as measures to ensure accountability. Equally important is cultivating a culture that encourages open dialogue on this topic.

What changes have you observed following the ASH training?

This program has significantly shifted mindsets across all levels. Everyone gained a clear understanding of what sexual harassment entails, how to prevent it, and the steps to take if it occurs. With expert quidance from the labour lawyer, a GIZ consulting team member, we developed a comprehensive ASH policy that includes detailed regulations for receiving, handling, and addressing reports of sexual harassment. Also, various awareness raising activities have been conducted by the workers such as series of radio broadcast, poster design contest on ASH topic to deepen the employees' understanding of ASH prevention.

Do you believe brands should take a more active role?

While factories hold significant responsibility for creating safe working environment, the brands also play a crucial role. By sharing responsibilities, the brands and factories can create synergistic relationship that ensures good working conditions and drives positive change across the supply chain.

Background information

The Anti-sexual harassment (ASH) programme leverages the "Manual on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace" and was implemented with support of GIZ across 130 enterprises in the apparel and electronics sectors in Vietnam. Key components include advisory on ASH policies, enhancing sensitivity on sexual harassment issues, and strengthening grievance mechanisms.

KICKING OFF TRAINING ON CHEMICAL SAFETY IN ELECTRONICS SUPPLY CHAINS

In October 2024, the first Train-the-Trainer sessions were held in Hanoi, Vietnam for local trainers. The courses are being developed by the Clean Electronics Production Network (CEPN) supported by IGS aiming to better protect workers in electronics supply chains.

Millions of workers in the electronics supply chains are exposed to hazardous chemicals. Manufacturing electronic components involves the use of hundreds of different chemicals, and a single electronic product may contain over 1,000 chemicals. For many electronics companies and suppliers, protecting workers from hazardous chemical exposure can be challenging, often due to limited knowledge or insufficient resources.

The CEPN training was developed with the input of leading electronics brands and other stakeholders and covers key topics such as an introduction to workplace chemical safety, methods for identifying chemical hazards and exposure risks, and strategies to enhance worker engagement in chemical safety procedures.

Following the initial sessions, the trainings in three modalities (in-person, webinar and e-learning) are now being beta tested in Vietnamese and Malaysian supplier factories. Feedback will be incorporated into the training before it is officially launched in spring 2025.

These resources will undoubtedly be valuable in enhancing our team's understanding and practices regarding workplace chemical safety.

> Manager of a Participating Supplier Facility



Project Manager, Michelle Turner, delivering the Train-the-Trainer session



Workers at a supplier facility participating in a webinar training



ADVANCING WORKERS' RIGHTS IN TAMIL NADU'S ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY

At a multi-stakeholder roundtable in Chennai on October 8th 2024, participants discussed pressing human rights and environmental challenges—such as exposure to hazardous chemicals, and barriers to collective bargaining. The roundtable was co-hosted by Cividep India and IGS.

The event brought together representatives from the electronics industry, civil society, academia and international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UN Women.

Key Takeaways included

- Shared Responsibility: Businesses, trade unions, NGOs, and policymakers must work together to identify and mitigate human rights risks.
- Focus on worker voices: Women face specific risks, such as discrimination and unsafe working conditions, so actionable solutions to collect worker voices and address specific risks are needed.
- Local-Global Exchange: Insights from the Worker Resource Center (WRC) in Sriperumbudur, supported by Cividep and IGS, illustrated how local initiatives can empower workers, enhance access to grievance mechanisms and inform mitigation and remediation measures of global businesses.

Background information

Cividep India, headquartered in Bangalore, partners with IGS to promote workers' rights in Tamil Nadu's electronics sector. This collaboration includes initiatives such as supporting the Worker Resource Centre in Sriperumbudur, which has already provided training to over 600 electronics workers on their rights and grievance mechanisms.





IGS

BATTERY RECYCLING IN NIGERIA: POSITIVE LISTING PUBLISHED

The increasing global demand for lead, e.g. for car batteries, is largely met by recycling. But unsound practices in used-lead-acid battery (ULAB) recycling can have severe environmental and health impacts.

A new **positive list** now recommends a first recycling company in Nigeria as preferred disposal option for ULABs, but also as a source of responsibly sourced secondary raw materials for buyers. Other recyclers are working on being added to the list.

Substandard recycling of batteries is a main contributor to lead poisoning of workers and people in the surrounding communities. The mortality rate from lead poisoning is higher than from malaria and HIV combined. High levels of lead exposure can also lead to irreparable brain damage, which is not only a personal tragedy for those affected, but also results in significant economic losses for affected economies in low- and middle-income countries. It is estimated that still a third of all children worldwide have elevated levels of lead in their blood.

Due to the hazardous nature of lead and used lead-acid batteries, the sourcing of such secondary raw materials from low- and middle-income countries is subject to various supply chain due diligence risks. An increasing number of binding and voluntary procurement guidelines therefore require users and buyers of raw materials to conduct due diligence in the supply chain.



Background information

The listing was compiled by Deutsches Öko-Institut e.V. in collaboration with the IGS-sponsored Partnership for Responsible Battery and Metal Recycling (ProBaMet). Facilities positively listed within this framework were assessed by independent experts based on four core principles:

- Meet all applicable regulations in the respective country/region
- Operate significantly above the commonly encountered industry practices in their respective country
- Comply with a minimum set of requirements listed in the documentation of the facility's positive listing
- Being committed to continuous improvements with a view to full compliance with all established good practices as laid out in the Standard Operating Procedures within three vears





(Left) Poor standards in ULAB recycling companies: Toxic lead dust, unpaved floor, no exhaust system, no occupational safety (Right) Employees of the Nigerian Environmental Protection Agency visit a recycling company



Workers need a holistic ecosystem to report violations of human rights and to seek remedy in case of violations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE IGS

- Workers have access to effective grievance mechanisms
- Stakeholders are trained in the implementation of local grievance mechanisms
- Cooperation agreements promote the harmonisation of external safety nets for workers

HOW TO MOVE TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE **MINERAL SUPPLY CHAINS**

From 3rd to 6th February, the 31st edition of the African Mining Indaba was held in Cape Town, South Africa, with IGS being present for the first time. Since its inception in 1994, the conference has become a global event for anyone working in the mining sector.

Due to the global rush for critical raw materials needed for the energy transition, most discussions were focussing on how to create more benefits for production countries and minimize negative impacts of mining on the environment and for local communities.

But how can the energy transition be done in an environmentally fair and just way? Apart from risk monitoring along the supply chains and implementing prevention measures, it is key to guarantee access to remedy for anyone who has suffered harm due to mining operations. In this context IGS together with its partner, the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA), organised a workshop to discuss how just remedy measures can look like.

More inclusive and equitable approaches are needed to harness the benefits of mining for local communities and companies need to take the monitoring of environmental risks seriously. When harm is done, remedy needs to be guaranteed. In a next step IRMA will develop further a guiding framework for remedy in mining which will be presented later this year.







More Information: African Mining Indaba Website

"COMMUNICATION AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS IS KEY"

Q&A with with Björn Skorpen Claeson

- Executive Director at Electronics Watch, about key achievements and lessons learnt from the collaboration with IGS

(1) What has been achieved within the last two years during the collaboration?

To name some impressive figures: We have monitored 24 factories employing a total of 135,335 workers in Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan and China. 279 grievances have been raised. Civil society organisations have innovated and improved monitoring and grievance processes. Trade unions have used our mechanism and participated in the remedy process. These activities contributed to promoting access to external grievance mechanisms to more than 125,000 workers. And very concretely: Estimated 2,500 workers in four factories received money owed to them.

(2) Can you name some of the measures that helped to reach these impacts?

Organised, ongoing communication with civil society partners as well as industry actors has been key. And training trade unions and NGOs on how to gather and report evidence of rights violations was also fundamental.

(3) Is there one story in particular that sticks in your mind?

A trade union in Malaysia reported to us, that around 700 migrant workers making electronics components were in forced labour; they were in debt bondage and did not have access to their passports. We found multiple additional harms, including serious health and safety issues like chemical spills on bare skin or breathing fumes of chemicals without proper protection. We engaged major buyers in dialogue with the union. As a result, the factory signed a collective bargaining agreement with the union, and buyers conducted an investigation on health and safety with a chemical specialist. The process is still ongoing, but the example shows that communication and the involvement of all steknolders is key to real improvements for workers.

Background information

Electronics Watch is an NGO that uses public procurement leverage to protect the rights of workers in global electronics supply chains. IGS is supporting the scaling of the grievance mechanism in Vietnam, China, Taiwan, and Malaysia.

COLLABORATING FOR SUSTAINABLE AUTOMOTIVE SUPPLY CHAINS

The automotive industry plays an important role in business relations between Germany and Türkiye. Yet, there are challenges related to fundamental labour rights, particularly freedom of association and collective bargaining. At a workshop on 25th and 26th November 2024 in Izmit, relevant stakeholders came together to jointly develop solutions.





Participants of the workshop in Izmit (top), Kemal Özkan and Georg Leutert from IndustriALL (below)

In an open dialogue, the participants were able to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges - and how these can be overcome with the instruments provided by the German Supply Chain Act. By the end of the workshop, 90% of the participants answered that they are in favour of continuing the process, around 50 % agreed to jointly plan and implement concrete measures.

The next steps will be the drafting of a roadmap for the next year, with the aim of developing a common industry-wide understanding (MoU), followed by a second workshop in April 2025 in Türkiye.

The stakeholders included OEMs and suppliers from the German Automotive Sector Dialogue; Turkish Automotive Suppliers; Turkish and German Trade Unions; Industry Associations; the RBH Türkiye; government representatives from Germany and Türkiye; the International Labor Organisation as well as civil society organisations.

Background information

The workshop was part of IGS's collaboration with IndustriALL Global Union and IG Metall, which aims at developing effective grievance and remedy mechanisms through enhanced social dialogue and partner cooperation in automotive supply chains in Türkiye.



More Information:

Tackling automotive supply chain challenges in Türkiye



THE RBH NETWORK

Suppliers and stakeholders in producing countries need support in implementing due diligence obligations.



OBJECTIVES OF THE IGS

- Responsible Business Helpdesks in producing countries offer information, networking and advisory services for companies and other stakeholders to perform due diligence
- The capacities of companies and other stakeholders to perform due diligence are strenghtened and they are increasingly implementing them

JOINT STATEMENT ON CSDD BY THE RBH NETWORK

Seven members of The RBH Network have formed a Joint Statement on what is necessary to ensure a successful implementation of CSDD in global supply chains. The Statement is directed at regulators and buying companies.

- **1. Shared Responsibility:** Achieving sustainability requires fair cost-sharing and collaboration.
- 2. **Responsible Purchasing:** Buyers and suppliers should foster trust through responsible contracts and purchasing practices.
- **3. Collaboration over Disengagement:** Support suppliers with preventive measures instead of sudden disengagement.
- **4. Empowering Suppliers:** Help suppliers build their own sustainability strategies through targeted support
- **5**. **Policy Coherence:** Align regulations for consistency and clarity worldwide.



Tanja Lindell from RBH Serbia (left) handed over the joint statement on 13 November 2024 to Greta Koch, employee of MEP Axel Voss, who actively shape the future CSDDD guidelines.



Background information

Responsible Business Helpdesks inform and advise local companies on new supply chain regulations and sustainability in eight countries. Hosted by chambers and associations, they form The RBH Network, supported by IGS. The seven signing members - CCIS (Serbia), BGMEA and BKEMA (Bangladesh), Turkonfed (Turkey), UTICA (Tunisia), CCE (Mexico), and EuroCham (Cambodia) - represent over 360,000 companies globally.

MORE INFORMATION:

Joint Statement (PDF) The RBH Network on LinkedIn The RBH Network (PDF)

THE RBH NETWORK AT THE UN FORUM ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

From 25-27 November 2024, the 13th United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights took place in Geneva. Representatives of the RBH Network were present as guests and panellists.

RBH Serbia on SME-panel

Small and Mid-sized Enterprises (SMEs) need better access to ESG-finance and localized information systems. These were two key take-aways of the female panel including Tanja Lindell from RBH Serbia on 'Empowering SMEs: Awareness Raising and Capacity Building in Business and Human Rights'. RBHs around the globe are offering this needed localized information on HREDD and are one solution for SMEs.

Meeting of Helpdesks

The helpdesk landscape is evolving dynamically. Besides the growing RBH Network, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden are offering helpdesks to support their national private sector, while ILO and OHCHR provide help on their international frameworks. New EU support structures are currently developed. A network meeting organised by the German and Dutch helpdesks in Geneva provided a great opportunity for better cooperation.

RBH Bangladesh at round table on HREDD-challenges

Wasim Zakariah from the RBH Bangladesh gave valuable insights on local HREDD implementation in the consultation round table of the 'TEI Sustainability in Global Value Chains'. He highlighted that many global textile brands still have a long way to go in implementing DD-principles. The results of the round table will feed into the development of the above-mentioned new EU support structure, which will be provided by DG INTPA and the Team-Europe-Initiative (TEI).



Tanja Lindell from RBH Serbia with SME-panel in Geneva



Network dinner of the various helpdesk

Our Objectives

The Initiative for Global Solidarity strives to achieve tangible improvements for people and the environment in producing countries.

800,000

Workers are exposed to fewer risks in the workplace.



2,000

Companies take advantage of the RBH services

Language Already achieved: 1,699



500,000

Workers have access to grievance mechanisms

Already achieved: 492,878



150

Companies integrate sustainability indicators in their data management



5,500

Stakeholders are trained in the implementation of grievance mechanisms

🖒 Already achieved: 4,759



Outlook & Imprint

Outlook

- March 31-April 2: Cambodia Textile Summit in Phnom Penh >> more info
- May 5-7: OECD Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains in Paris >> more info
- May 14: RBA/IGS Conference in Brussels >> more info
- May 14-15: Cascale Forum in Ho Chi Minh City >> more info

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IGS INITIATIVE FOR GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

The Initiative for Global Solidarity (IGS) promotes the implementation of human rights and environmental due diligence in global supply chains by scaling and harmonising proven approaches.

The IGS supports stakeholders along global supply chains to exercise shared responsibility for the impacts of business practices on people and the planet.

The IGS is working on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and is implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

Further information about the IGS can be found here.



