Human Right to Water: CEO Water Mandate

Meena Palaniappan, Pacific Institute

World Water Forum

March 17, 2009
Summary of the conversation and debate from March 16, 2009
CEO Water Mandate
What does a human right to water mean?

- Sufficient
- Safe
- Acceptable
- Physically Accessible
- Affordable

- Although not *formally* recognized, implicit in many UN declarations
What are the roles of various stakeholders? Ruggie Framework

1. Governments’ duty to **protect** human rights

2. Businesses’ responsibility to **respect** all human rights

3. The need for more effective **access to remedies** to people affected by corporate related human rights abuses
What does the Responsibility to Respect mean?

- due diligence
- internal integration
- monitoring
- transparency
- accountability
- public participation
- grievance mechanism
- universal service obligation (non-discrimination)
**Industrial users**
- Comply with laws
- Be efficient
- Dispose responsibly
- Assess rights impact in choosing suppliers and site
- Work with governments and stakeholders

**Water providers**
- Abide by law
- Include the marginalized
- Ensure affordability (USO)
- Prevent unwarranted connections, don’t raise rates.
Issues Brought Up During Discussion

1. How can business in their public policy engagements do more to ensure right to water? What are we talking about…
   • What can businesses collectively do to do get governments be better at providing these rights?
   • How can businesses better respect the human right to water?
   • both…
2. What is the role of business vis-à-vis the government related to basic water needs
   • This is government’s responsibility vs. This is a shared responsibility (or the private sector needs to play a stronger role)
   • Should the private sector advocate for a human right to water to the government and international community?
Issues Brought Up During Discussion

3. The interconnections between different competing “rights” (the right to food, water, and energy)
   • What is more important to respect, provide, or protect?

4. The problems of tracking/reporting on supply chain water use.
   • Lack of sphere of influence, or opaque knowledge base (commodity markets)
5. What are baseline responsibilities vs. aspirational goals?
   • Baseline: improving facility water use and community relationships
   • Aspirational: improving supply chain water use
   • Baseline or aspirational: advocacy with the government?
Issues Brought Up During Discussion

6. Need more clarity on:
   • Who is the community—where I sell, or where I have my facility?
   • Corporations are not the only ones to use/abuse water
   • Where does corporate responsibility terminate/how far does it go?
7. Some success stories/examples from other industries on cases where what seemed impossible was done--
   • Apparel
   • Diamonds
   • Electronic waste
Issues Brought Up During Discussion

8. What do/can corporations bring to the human rights approach? What do/can they obtain from it?
   • Expertise
   • Skills
   • Speed of movement
   • They are already involved in public policy
   • What can companies do on their own regardless of what government has done?
   • Global compact
Next Steps

9. Next steps from Human Rights discussion
   • Agreement in the room on the existence of a human right to water… but, what is corporate responsibility in this?
   • We need a lot more back and forth on the elements before proceeding
   • We need more input from the beginning
   • We need collaborations with government, and civil society to make this work.
Thank you

Meena Palaniappan
mpal@pacinst.org
www.pacinst.org