

Report by Business and Human Rights Centre
To Mary Robinson and the Tang Prize Foundation

Strengthening Corporate Legal Accountability
August 2026

Introduction

Embedding human rights at the heart of business requires corporate legal accountability for harms, in order to ensure the private sector both operates within the bounds of the law and contributes positively to economic and climate justice. Despite growing corporate power and increased opposition to “ESG” issues in some jurisdictions, there has also been an emergence of more assertive regulatory frameworks in others, seeking to centre human rights in business. This project has thus sought to harness the opportunity of the moment to advance better corporate human rights practices across key sectors worldwide by strengthening the ability of communities and workers to safeguard their rights through the courts, enhancing private sector understanding of the growing legal risks of abusive business models, and advancing the global conversation on corporate legal accountability.

With generous support from the Tang Prize Foundation, in the past year we strengthened the visibility, accessibility, and analytical quality of our [corporate legal accountability work](#).

Key outcomes achieved in the past year include:

- **Increased Accessibility and Legal Awareness:** Our updated [Corporate Legal Accountability portal](#) and [analysis of key trends in energy transition litigation](#) are key sources of knowledge for rightsholders, academics, and litigators alike, whilst our Regional Strategic Litigation Network led workshops with Indigenous communities in Chile, Mexico, and Argentina to improve access to information and build cross-community strategies for advocacy and litigation.
- **Expanded Advocacy and Litigation Resources:** We grew our suite of legal resources, including our [Corporate Legal Accountability Updates](#) and our [Litigation Tracking Tool](#), into trusted resources for empowered community advocacy and strategic legal action, directly supporting rightsholders such as a [Brazilian litigation coalition](#) pursuing a case against a wind project on rights-based grounds.
- **Strengthened Global Advocacy for Corporate Accountability:** Our advocacy and awareness-raising around the UN Binding Treaty process reached thousands of global partners and allies, and spotlighted Global South and community voices to put lived experience of corporate harm at the heart of ongoing legislative negotiations.

To this end, the Business and Human Rights Centre (BHRC)¹ is pleased to submit our report on the generous grant from the Tang Prize Foundation.

Project Results

Our progress towards this project’s outcomes is detailed below.

Outcome 1: Increased Accessibility and Legal Awareness: *Improved access to information on corporate accountability mechanisms for communities and workers, particularly in underserved and high-risk areas.*

Corporate Legal Accountability portal

¹ In December 2025, Business and Human Rights Resource Centre [changed its name](#) to Business and Human Rights Centre.

We continued to develop our [Corporate Legal Accountability portal](#) (CLA portal) – the only global information hub on corporate legal accountability – which now plays a central role in improving access to knowledge and information on corporate legal accountability mechanisms for communities, workers, and the business and human rights (“BHR”) movement at large. Throughout the reporting period, we monitored and provided updates on latest corporate legal accountability news, including lawsuits and legislative developments, as well as analysis, resources, and commentary.

BHRC’s [Just Transition Litigation Tracking Tool](#) (see Outcome 2 for further detail on this work) and [analysis](#), which documented 95 lawsuits filed since 2009 in response to human rights abuses linked to energy transition projects, were also an important source of knowledge for communities and workers. Throughout the reporting period, our 2025 analysis provided communities with evidence of the growing trend of rightsholder-led legal action when companies fail to adopt a human rights-centred approach and helped to raise awareness of strategic litigation as an additional tool for communities seeking corporate accountability. Our op-ed in [Board Agenda](#) and media coverage of our work in [The Guardian](#), [Mongabay](#), and [Business Green](#), alongside our direct dissemination of information to partners and allies, ensured broad reach amongst diverse audiences, from CSOs and community groups to corporate actors; and helped to provide greater transparency around the procedural aspects of this type of litigation, enabling important and previously absent insights for communities, workers, and civil society.

UN Legally Binding Instrument for Business and Human Rights webinar series

Our [webinar series](#) on the UN Binding Treaty also served to reinforce and strengthen communities’ and workers’ awareness of the power of corporate accountability mechanisms, including the proposed treaty as well as developing regulatory regimes. The series drew community representatives and civil society together to explore the centrality of robust regulation; spotlight rightsholder voices, particularly from the Global South, on the human rights impacts of deregulation on affected communities; and establish a platform for communities and civil society to access and engage with regulatory and multilateral processes and ensure their lived experiences inform the development of legislation (see Outcome 3 for greater detail on this work).

Regional Strategic Litigation Network on Business and Human Rights (BHR) in Latin America

BHRC sustained and further developed the Regional Strategic Litigation Network on BHR in Latin America, which brings together civil society, lawyers, and human rights defenders (HRDs) to facilitate dialogue, exchange knowledge, and strengthen advocacy and litigation strategies related to corporate abuse in the transition to renewables. During the reporting period the network [tracked litigation efforts](#) in Latin America demanding a just energy transition, which our allies and partners tell us provide a crucial legal lens to their advocacy and a knowledge base that helps to ensure these avenues for justice are visible and accessible for communities and workers.

Over the past year, our Network created a trusted space for learning, information sharing, and strategising between communities and civil society organisations across the region. In service of our objective to increase awareness of corporate accountability mechanisms and BHR standards for communities in underserved and high-risk regions, we delivered several in-person workshops for grassroots organisations and frontline communities in Chile, Mexico, Argentina, and Peru. Our direct engagement helped to equip Indigenous Peoples and transition-affected communities in Latin America with important tools and resources for their advocacy efforts against corporate abuse and provided crucial support to communities’ ongoing litigation efforts.

For example, in September 2025, BHRC’s South America Researcher and Representative facilitated BHR capacity building workshops in San Pedro de Atacama, Chile, for the Consejo de Pueblo Atacameño, which in late 2024 [filed a legal complaint](#) against lithium mining companies for environmental damage. The workshops were an opportunity for deep engagement with Indigenous Peoples directly affected by transition mineral mining, many of whom reported that the workshop marked their first exposure to BHR concepts and frameworks. Significantly, our workshop in San Pedro de Atacama convened representatives from communities and associations previously separated by inter-community frictions stemming from mining

sector-related tensions and provided a rare opportunity to build cross-community dialogue and consensus on collective strategies, including advocacy and strategic litigation, to protect Indigenous Peoples' rights and seek accountability for violations related to the energy transition. Following the workshops, the Consejo de Pueblos Atacameños is utilising our tools to navigate international corporate accountability mechanisms.

In the same month, BHRC's Mexico and Central America Researcher and Representative also delivered workshops on collective strengthening for the protection and respect of human rights in business conduct in Mexico City. We convened diverse grassroots groups, labour movements, Indigenous Peoples, and local organizations from across Mexico to build a shared and contextualised understanding of the just energy transition, with training on national and international BHR standards, corporate liability, and collective strategy-building to confront corporate power.

In Argentina, we collaborated with [Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales \(FARN\)](#) to convene a series of strategic meetings and workshops in Buenos Aires in June 2026, focused on critical minerals and the protection of HRDs. The activities brought together civil society organisations, international experts, and Indigenous leaders from the Salinas Grandes and Laguna de Guayatayoc basin – home to significant lithium reserves and [growing community resistance](#) to mining activities allegedly carried out in the absence of Indigenous Peoples' free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). Key discussions addressed corporate human rights due diligence aligned with UN and Inter-American standards, practical tools for monitoring and advocacy, and the identification of risks and impacts related to extractive activities. And in Peru, following our earlier workshops for grassroots organisations and Indigenous Peoples, our partner Derechos Humanos y Medio Ambiente (DHUMA) is also incorporating our BHR framework into their advocacy and litigation work.

Outcome 2: Expanded Advocacy and Litigation Resources: *Enhanced legal resources, such as the Global Strategic Litigation Database and community support tools, to empower rights holders and facilitate strategic legal actions.*

Corporate Legal Accountability portal and Quarterly Updates

Throughout the reporting period, BHRC continued to track regulatory and remedy advances on our [CLA portal](#), provide objective information about lawsuits against companies in which human rights abuses are alleged, as well as showcase legislative developments at the national and international levels. We maintained a consistent public-facing stream of legal accountability resources, including publishing four [Corporate Legal Accountability Quarterly Updates](#) (CLA Updates). In addition to profiling corporate human rights lawsuits, major legal developments, and resources, the Updates provided timely analysis of emerging issues, including [Venezuela's new oil regime and reform of its Hydrocarbons Law](#), [migrant worker exploitation](#), and [corporate legal accountability legislative trends](#). Our most recent [Quarterly Update](#) published in June 2026 built upon the growing multitude of lawsuits filed against tech companies to [profile](#) jury verdicts against major sector leaders Meta and Google and spotlighted a burgeoning trend towards tech company accountability. The Updates were published in English, French, German, Spanish and Chinese for an expanded global audience of more than 6,000 subscribers globally, and we saw high open rates across all languages, with particularly high rates for our Chinese (45.8%), German (48.6%), and English (45.5%) editions in June.

Just Transition Litigation Tracking Tool and Corporate Legal Accountability Database

We expanded our [Just Transition Litigation Tracking Tool](#) and reinforced its standing as a key legal resource for community and civil society to monitor rights-related litigation linked to transition minerals and renewable energy projects. BHRC also increased the number of tracked cases in our general [Lawsuit Profiles Database](#), which focuses on precedent-setting cases across sectors related to corporate legal accountability, to 342 in the reporting period. The tool and database proved useful for our movement, with partners highlighting its value as a body of evidence that can raise awareness of the existence and viability of litigation as a corporate accountability mechanism. For example, the tool was recently used by the London School of Economics in its [Global trends in climate change litigation: 2026 snapshot](#) report. During the reporting period, we also saw our tool directly used by those involved in litigation, including a Brazilian organisation that [filed a lawsuit](#) against a wind project in the country. We provided additional information following their use of our database

and cases, and we have continued to engage since. We will profile this case in our upcoming 2026 Just Transition Litigation analysis.

The 2026 Just Transition Litigation analysis will be published in full in September; a subset of this analysis was incorporated into [BHRC's Transition Mineral and Human Rights Tracker](#) in June 2026, highlighting the growing trend of resistance through the courts by communities affected by transition mineral mining, with the highest number initiated in Latin America and the Caribbean. The rights most frequently impacted by renewable energy and mineral mining projects are the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and water rights (i.e. access to water and/or water pollution) as well as Indigenous People's rights. We are currently preparing a two-week LinkedIn advertising campaign scheduled for September to promote our analysis with specific senior job titles across the renewable energy sector and will spotlight the salient legal risks for the private sector of pursuing abusive business models in energy transition projects. Through carefully designed 'need-to-know' one-pagers, the campaign will aim to put key findings directly before senior corporate decision makers to engender better corporate human rights practice. The campaign draws on the lessons and successes of similar recent efforts in other areas of our work, in which we were able to use such campaigns to build significant sector-wide reach and traction and ensure our message not only reaches but engages its target audience.

Since the publication of our last Just Transition Litigation analysis in July 2025, we have heard from partners and allies that it provides a valuable insight into what litigation can achieve, and its feasibility and availability as an additional tool, that affected communities may be less aware of, where other avenues for accountability and justice have been exhausted. Our conversations with partners and allies over the past year have confirmed that together, our legal resources – our CLA portal, CLA Update, Litigation Tracking Tool, and Global Lawsuit Database – now form a critical body of tools for diverse audiences involved in advocacy and litigation for corporate accountability, and are equally important as a source of information for CSOs and grassroots communities as they are for corporate actors.

Outcome 3: Strengthened Global Advocacy for Corporate Accountability: *Opportunities to influence corporate accountability standards, regulatory frameworks, and/or corporate decision-making are increased, especially in emerging economies where the impact on communities is profound.*

UN Legally Binding Instrument for Business and Human Rights

BHRC strengthened collaborative advocacy efforts for a legally binding instrument on business and human rights, engaging a broad global audience throughout our advocacy and convening around the 11th session of the UN open-ended intergovernmental working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights (IGWG), in October 2025.

During the negotiations, we provided daily updates to inform over 9,600 subscribers via our [Binding Business LinkedIn Newsletter](#), as well as our 34,700 [Weekly Update newsletter](#) subscribers. Together with FORUM-ASIA, we held a webinar series, [Treaty-making in troubled times](#), to raise awareness of key issues related to the negotiations and amplify the voices and perspectives of civil society in the surrounding discussions. The series received a cumulative attendance of approximately 720, representing approximately 50 countries including many in the Global South. The first webinar acknowledged ongoing efforts in some corners to roll back regulations, to examine how deregulation affects communities in the Global South and what this means for holding corporations accountable for human rights violations. The second session explored what a victim-centred treaty might entail, including how such an instrument might respond to overlapping and structural vulnerabilities. In both sessions, Global South voices and community perspectives were intended to ensure lived experiences of corporate harm continue to inform decision-makers in legislative development.

Throughout the reporting period, we also maintained our [Binding Treaty Big Issue webpage](#), which generates consistent traffic year-round and was our fourth most visited Big Issue webpage to November 2025 (just after the 11th session of the IGWG). In October 2025, we published a blog by Feminists for a Binding Treaty coalition, [Fighting corporate power: time for a feminist treaty blog](#), and between April and June 2026, we added four

further blogs to our [blog series webpage](#), authored by Indigenous Peoples, legal experts, and civil society representing Global South communities and organisations. The blogs spotlighted experts' reflections on the treaty process ahead of the 12th session of the IGWG, scheduled for October 2026, to examine [treaty negotiations after the CSDDD](#), [corporate influence](#), [achieving a gender-centric binding treaty](#), and [justice and remedy for victims](#).

Our consistent provision of updates, analysis, and a platform for constructive exchange between states, civil society, legal experts, and the private sector helped to centre community voices and ensure their perspectives inform the development of legislation. Feedback from partners and allies during the reporting period has confirmed that our resources are now considered valuable tools in pursuit of this aim, and that BHRC is an important convenor of key stakeholder voices on the topic of the legally binding instrument. Feedback following our work adjacent to the 11th session included:

- *[“This is so important! Thank you for sharing the progress of a legally binding instrument. Although this is a challenging task, it is also a very important one, and the UN must continue pushing for this instrument to be adopted.”](#)*
- *[“Thank you for this very important article, as you state many businesses and business leaders understand the need for standards that are not simply voluntary but are obligatory.”](#)*

ICC Environmental Policy Launch

Following BHRC's written input to contribute to the International Criminal Court (ICC)'s draft policy on environmental crimes, in December 2025 we were invited by the ICC's Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) to speak at the [launch of their policy addressing environmental damage](#) through the Rome Statute. The policy presents the OTP's intention to prevent and address environmental harm, including through prosecuting Rome Statute crimes with an environmental dimension and fostering engagement with corporate actors. Our intervention at the launch was a valuable opportunity to highlight our key messaging on corporate legal accountability for environmental harm, including within the global effort towards a just energy transition, as well as the salient legal risks faced by companies, their directors, and their investors, when they do not adopt a rights-centred approach to doing business.

Challenges and Successes

We implemented this project against a backdrop of significant challenges for corporate legal accountability. The growing deployment of Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPS) targeting human rights defenders and civil society organisations poses a considerable threat to the space for legitimate advocacy and litigation against corporate abuse. This was strikingly exemplified by, for instance, Energy Transfer's [ongoing case](#) against Greenpeace; cases such as these risk provoking a chilling effect on corporate legal accountability work more broadly. In parallel, deregulatory trends in some jurisdictions – such as the [dilution of Europe's landmark CSDDD](#) – have reinforced the central importance of informed and empowered community-led advocacy for binding legislation to prevent corporate abuse from happening at all, and guarantee accountability and remedy where it does.

Despite this, we have also tracked [promising recent legislative developments](#) and growing momentum around mandatory due diligence regulation globally. And, as allegations of human and environmental rights violations continue to plague transition mineral and renewable energy projects globally, [we documented](#) an increase in related strategic litigation, driven by communities' and workers' growing awareness of their rights and of litigation as a viable avenue when all other means of redress have been exhausted. As our cumulative evidence show, companies pursuing abusive corporate practice increasingly risk legal action – and thus costly project delays and reputational damage. We intend to continue making the business case that rights-respecting projects are good for business, and that the transition to green economies will only be fast if it is also fair, just, and grounded in corporate accountability. We have also observed a marked increase in accountability for tech companies specifically, including the jury verdicts against tech giants Meta and YouTube profiled in our [June](#)

[2026 Quarterly Update](#). These landmark verdicts represent new possibilities for big tech accountability, and an important area for focused attention and advocacy going forward. Taken alongside our good progress towards our objectives during the reporting period, we see important, strategic opportunities to continue to strengthen our collective efforts, with partners and allies, to meaningfully advance legal accountability for corporate harm across key jurisdictions, and ensure the private sector both operates within the bounds of the law and contributes to a more just and equitable economy.

Conclusion

Amidst persistent corporate harm and increasing cases of rightsholder-led legal action in response, the collective effort to advance corporate legal accountability and rights-based regulatory frameworks is more important than ever. Shrinking civic space and ongoing uncertainty in the global funding landscape put particular and direct pressure on our partners and allies across the world. In this context, your support has been central to our ability to respond to challenges in meaningful partnership with Indigenous Peoples and affected communities, and deepen our collaboration with civil society, lawyers and academics to amplify our collective impact as we seek to strengthen rights protections. We are grateful for the Tang Prize Foundation's commitment to strengthening the business and human rights movement.

BHRC thanks the Tang Prize Foundation for its generous support over the previous year. Upon request, we will be happy to provide any additional details on other areas of work.