B-Tech 2.0: AI Product Design Workstream

May 2026

The OHCHR B-Tech Project and BSR are partnering with AI industry leaders on a new workstream that will produce foundational guidance for integrating Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) into AI product development processes.

Outputs will include:

(a) a Product-Level HRDD Guide;
(b) Human Rights One-Pager Briefs on timely topics; and
(c) multiple interactive events.

These deliverables will support civil society's knowledge and understanding of product development within AI companies and establish a shared foundation and common understanding of HRDD across the sector. Drafting will be informed by engagement with practitioners in AI companies and insights from external experts. The workstream will run over the span of one year.

Innovating responsibly - Embedding human rights in AI product development

AI technology holds incredible potential to drive innovation, solve complex challenges, and improve lives across the globe. However, realizing this promise requires a responsible approach—one that safeguards human rights and builds trust in products. As AI continues to evolve, its development, deployment, and use carry important human rights implications. Risks include harm caused by privacy issues around data collection and processing practices, AI-generated disinformation, biases within large language model outputs, and challenges to property rights linked to AI training datasets as well as military and law enforcement applications of AI that have serious implications for rights to life, integrity, Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Assembly and Association. While these impacts can often be prevented or mitigated, organizations may miss critical opportunities to do so due to the absence of robust HRDD during the product development stage.

Integrating HRDD into AI product development can be a key driver of responsible innovation and differentiator amongst AI companies. Under the UNGPs, companies have a responsibility to conduct HRDD to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for adverse human rights impacts connected to their operations, products, and services. There is also an increasingly widespread regulatory necessity to do so. Examples such as the EU

AI Act and the South Korea Basic AI Act reflect a growing trend coinciding a global increase of interest on the issue by investors, politicians, end-users, and other stakeholders, both with regard to general technology products and with regard to AI systems specifically.

AI solutions that prioritize human rights protections are not only safer but also more trustworthy, fostering consumer confidence and strengthening the long-term viability of AI-driven advancements. By embedding fairness, transparency, and accountability into AI systems, businesses can create technologies that serve society while also sustaining their competitive edge.

Scope of Work

For responsible AI innovation to thrive, leadership teams—including boards, founders, and executives—must work in close coordination with research and product teams. A proactive and systematic approach ensures that AI products are both groundbreaking and responsible, balancing technological advancement with fundamental human rights protections. Organizations that embed these principles into their AI governance will not only mitigate risks but also position themselves as leaders in the development of AI that is both transformative and aligned with societal values.

Despite growing awareness of human rights considerations among AI developers, practical guidance on how to undertake HRDD during the development phase of AI products is limited. There is an urgent need to integrate HRDD throughout the product development process. And, at the same time, there is a critical need to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations to engage with AI development as critical partners. To provide meaningful oversight and feedback, these groups must understand not only the potential human rights risks of the AI systems at hand, but also the technical processes, decision points, and governance structures that shape how these products are designed and deployed. By equipping civil society actors with practical knowledge of the AI product development lifecycle, we can foster more inclusive dialogue, enable richer and decision-useful stakeholder input, and ensure that risk identification and mitigation strategies are informed by external experts and rightsholder representatives. This will not only enhance the quality and legitimacy of HRDD but also ensure that AI systems are developed in ways that mitigate risks and take into account the needs and priorities of specific use groups and communities, particularly the most vulnerable.

Scope and definition of "AI product" in the context of this workstream

For the purposes of this workstream, the definition of an "AI product" refers to downstream AI products that are being customized or fine-tuned for a specific context or purpose. While it's important to consider the interlinkages between the foundation model and the AI product or solution, the primary audience for this engagement are the downstream developers working to develop, customize, and/or fine-tune AI products for deployment.

Aim: Develop guidance for undertaking human rights due diligence during product development

OHCHR B-Tech's AI workstream aims to produce foundational guidance for integrating HRDD into AI product development processes. The planned "HRDD Guide for Product Teams" will provide companies with a straightforward, comprehensive, and practical foundation for integrating human rights considerations into product development in alignment with the UNGPs. It will also give civil society an overview of the product development cycle and how human rights due diligence is undertaken. B-Tech will partner with BSR to develop these resources and carry out the activities.

The primary audiences for this work are:

1. Teams within companies responsible for developing, evaluating, and deploying AI products, including product teams, human rights teams, and responsible AI teams.
2. Civil society organizations seeking to engage meaningfully, provide valuable insights on human rights risks, and contribute to more robust and inclusive due diligence practices in AI product development.

Outcomes

This workstream will generate outcomes that extend beyond the development of practical resources, contributing to lasting change in how AI products are developed and how external stakeholders engage with companies. Most importantly, the project will:

- **Establish a shared foundation and common understanding of Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) across AI-developing companies**: The project will create a baseline framework and shared language for what HRDD means in the context of AI product development, clarifying expectations, defining key concepts through accessible terminology, and identifying good practices. By providing practical, authoritative guidance, the workstream will help ensure consistency across

companies and support a level playing field in how human rights are addressed in AI development. This foundational understanding will underpin all subsequent outcomes, enhancing collaboration, enabling meaningful engagement with civil society, and promoting inclusive and effective due diligence practices across the sector.

- **Enhance civil society's capacity to engage with AI development**: Equip civil society actors with a clearer understanding of AI product development processes, governance structures, and decision points, enabling them to offer constructive, decision-useful feedback and insights.

- **Facilitate meaningful engagement across sectors**: Foster richer dialogue between AI companies and civil society by moving beyond high-level critique toward informed discussions rooted in an understanding of technology, customer contexts, and internal decision-making dynamics.

- **Support more inclusive due diligence**: Ensure that human rights risk identification and mitigation strategies reflect external expertise and rightsholder perspectives, thereby improving the legitimacy, quality, and impact of company HRDD efforts.

Together, these outcomes will strengthen the ecosystem of stakeholders around AI and enable the development of AI products that mitigate risks and align with human rights.

Events and stakeholder engagement

A key element of this project will be convening stakeholders to build shared understanding and foster constructive dialogue. The OHCHR B-Tech Project team will work to identify an existing global forum where both companies and civil society actors can come together to explore these issues in depth.

If your company or organization would like to be considered for involvement, please email OHCHR-B-techproject@un.org.