

Respect for stakeholder interests

The needs of stakeholders form a major part of ISO 26000. Stakeholders are defined very broadly as those people affected by decisions and activities or are able to exercise influence over the organisation. Organisations should respect stakeholders' interests, responding to them in an appropriate way. Of course, not all stakeholders are equal, and appropriate responses will vary. In order to take this seriously organisations must first identify their stakeholders (see implementation step 2 in chapter 5).

Product Liability laws in some countries give rights to customers which can have a significant impact on company profits if not managed properly. These laws make it clear that customers are stakeholders. Many of the companies affected by these laws had not previously considered customers to be stakeholders.

Respect for the rule of law

Organisations operate in the context of their national laws and must have respect for them. Although it can often be easy to contravene laws by accident, ignorance of the law is no excuse. Owners and their managers should take steps to know the legal context and monitor performance. Organisations that have little regard or respect for the laws of the country in which they operate are furthest from ISO 26000 expectations.

The Bangladesh Labour Act (BLA) 2006 contains provisions that are not always observed in Bangladesh. For example, according to the BLA, any business with more than 50 workers shall operate a Participation Committee and according to Industrial Relation Rules 1977 (still in effect until new rules are published), worker representatives will be appointed by election. This requirement is controversial in Bangladesh and is widely ignored. Recent fires in unlicensed factories have highlighted another area where some local businesses fall short of an acceptable standard.

Respect for international norms of behaviour

In an increasingly interconnected world, we are all greatly affected by the activities of organisations operating across borders. ISO 26000 therefore focuses on the need to respect international norms of behaviour in addition to local laws, especially where local laws are deficient or incomplete.