

A site specific approach to life cycle management of labour rights issues

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It can be observed from companies' public sustainability commitments and increasing participation in voluntary social responsibility or accountability initiatives like Global Compact and ISO26000 or certification schemes like SA8000 that management of labour rights issues in the product chain features high on the corporate agenda. The inclusion of labour rights issues is therefore central for a Social LCA method supporting life cycle management in a company. Assessment of labour rights violations is however not straightforward due to the sensitivity of the issue which impedes sharing and volunteering of information. This pleads for a country and/or industrial sector approach to assessment of labour rights violations; however, while it may offer a company information about the risks in the product chain such an assessment does not provide a proper foundation for managing these risks – at least not beyond dismissing suppliers and sub-contractors located in high risk environments. Balancing feasibility on one hand and reliability and relevance of results on the other hand is the challenge for a Social LCA method supporting life cycle management.

This presentation offers a toolbox for prioritisation and execution of site specific company assessment for the purpose of life cycle management. Experiences gained from executing site specific assessments of six different companies will be shared with the intent to emphasise the value of site specific company assessments as a basis for managing labour rights issues in the product chain through dialogue and partnership. The presented work is based on 5 years of research and practical CSR work in a globally operating Danish Corporation.