

Social Accountability 8000

International Standard

by Social Accountability International

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Supersedes previous versions: 2001, 2004 and 2008

The official language of this Standard and supporting documents is English. In the case of inconsistency between versions, reference shall default to the English version.



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About the Standard

This is the fourth issue of SA8000, a voluntary standard for auditable third-party verification, setting out the requirements to be met by organisations, including the establishment or improvement of workers' rights, workplace conditions and an effective management system. However, certification is only available per specific worksite.

The foundational elements of this Standard are based on the UN Declaration of Human Rights, conventions of the ILO, international human rights norms and national labour laws. The normative SA8000 certification audit reference documents are the SA8000: 2014 Standard and the *SA8000 Performance Indicator Annex*. Additionally, the *SA8000 Guidance Document* facilitates compliance with the Standard.

The *SA8000 Performance Indicator Annex*, a normative document, sets out the minimum performance expectations of an SA8000 certified organisation. The *Performance Indicator Annex* is found online at the [SAI website](#).

The *SA8000 Guidance Document* provides interpretations of SA8000 and how to implement its requirements; provides examples of methods for verifying compliance; and serves as a handbook for auditors and for organisations seeking SA8000 certification. The *Guidance Document* is found online at the [SAI website](#).

Although SA8000 is universally applicable, and certification is in principle available in any state or industry, there are exceptions to SA8000 certification. The SAI Advisory Board considers that there are some sectors where meeting all Standard requirements poses special difficulty due to industry norms and technical needs. The list of these current exceptions is found online at the [SAI website](#).

SA8000 is revised periodically as conditions change. Its revisions also incorporate corrections and improvements received from interested parties. It is hoped that the Standard, its *Performance Indicator Annex* and its *Guidance Document* will continue to improve, with the help of a wide variety of participants. SAI welcomes your suggestions as well. To comment on SA8000, the *SA8000 Performance Indicator Annex* or the *SA8000 Guidance Document*, please send written remarks to SAI at the physical or email address indicated below.

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I. Introduction

1. INTENT AND SCOPE

Intent: The intent of SA8000 is to provide an auditable, voluntary standard, based on the UN Declaration of Human Rights, ILO and other international human rights and labour norms and national labour laws, to empower and protect all personnel within an organisation's control and influence who provide products or services for that organisation, including personnel employed by the organisation itself and by its suppliers, sub-contractors, sub-suppliers and home workers. It is intended that an organisation shall comply with this Standard through an appropriate and effective Management System.

Scope: It is universally applicable to every type of organisation, regardless of e.g., its size, geographic location or industry sector.

2. MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Throughout your review of the next eight elements of SA8000, the requirements of this element - Management System - are central to their correct implementation, monitoring and enforcement. The Management System is the operational map that allows the organisation to achieve full and sustained compliance with SA8000 while continually improving, which is also known as Social Performance.

When implementing the Management System element, it is a required priority that joint worker and management involvement be established, incorporated and maintained throughout the compliance process with all the Standard's elements. This is particularly critical to identify and correct non-conformances and to assure continuing conformance.

II. Normative Elements and Their Interpretation

The organisation *shall* comply with local, national and all other applicable laws, prevailing industry standards, other requirements to which the organisation subscribes and this Standard. When such laws, standards or other requirements to which the organisation subscribes and this Standard address the same issue, the provision most favourable to workers *shall* apply.

The organisation *shall* also respect the principles of the following international instruments:

ILO Convention 1 (Hours of Work – Industry) and Recommendation 116 (Reduction of Hours of Work)

ILO Conventions 29 (Forced Labour) and 105 (Abolition of Forced Labour)

ILO Convention 87 (Freedom of Association)

ILO Convention 98 (Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining)

ILO Conventions 100 (Equal Remuneration) and 111 (Discrimination – Employment and Occupation)

ILO Convention 102 (Social Security - Minimum Standards)

ILO Convention 131 (Minimum Wage Fixing)

ILO Convention 135 (Workers’ Representatives)

ILO Convention 138 and Recommendation 146 (Minimum Age)

ILO Convention 155 and Recommendation 164 (Occupational Safety and Health)

ILO Convention 159 (Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment - Disabled Persons)

ILO Convention 169 (Indigenous and Tribal Peoples)

ILO Convention 177 (Home Work)

ILO Convention 181 (Private Employment Agencies)

ILO Convention 182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour)

ILO Convention 183 (Maternity Protection)

ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

III. Definitions (organized either alphabetically or by logical flow)

1. **Shall:** In this Standard the term “*shall*” indicates a requirement. Note: Italics have been added for emphasis.
2. **May:** In this Standard the term “*may*” indicates a permission. Note: Italics have been added for emphasis.
3. **Child:** Any person under 15 years of age, unless the minimum age for work or mandatory schooling is higher by local law, in which case the stipulated higher age applies in that locality.
4. **Child labour:** Any work performed by a child younger than the age(s) specified in the above definition of a child, except as provided for by ILO Recommendation 146.
5. **Collective bargaining agreement:** A contract specifying the terms and conditions for work, negotiated between an organisation (e.g. employer) or group of employers and one or more worker organisation(s).
6. **Corrective action:** Action to eliminate the cause(s) and root cause(s) of a *detected* non-conformance. Note: Corrective action is taken to *prevent recurrence*.
7. **Preventive action:** Action to eliminate the cause(s) and root cause(s) of a *potential* non-conformance. Note: Preventive action is taken to *prevent occurrence*.
8. **Forced or compulsory labour:** All work or service that a person has not offered to do voluntarily and is made to do under the threat of punishment or retaliation or that is demanded as a means of repayment of debt.
9. **Home worker:** A person who is contracted by the organisation or by its supplier, sub-supplier or subcontractor, but does not work on their premises.
10. **Human trafficking:** The recruitment, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the use of threat, force, deception or other forms of coercion, for the purpose of exploitation.
11. **Interested parties:** An individual or group concerned with or affected by the social performance and/or activities of the organisation.
12. **Living Wage:** The remuneration received for a standard work week by a worker in a particular place sufficient to afford a decent standard of living for the worker and her or his family. Elements of a decent standard of living include food, water, housing, education, health care, transport, clothing, and other essential needs including provision for unexpected events.
13. **Non-conformance:** Non-compliance with a requirement.
14. **Organisation:** The entirety of any business or non-business entity responsible for implementing the requirements of this Standard, including all personnel employed by the organisation. Note: For example, organisations include: companies, corporations, farms, plantations, cooperatives, NGOs and government institutions.
15. **Personnel:** All individuals employed or contracted by an organisation, including but not limited to directors, executives, managers, supervisors, workers and contract workers such as security guards, canteen workers, dormitory workers and cleaning workers.
16. **Worker:** All non-management personnel.
17. **Private employment agency:** Any entity, independent of the public authorities, which provides one or more of the following labour market services:

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- Matching offers of and applications for employment, without the agency becoming a party to the employment relationship(s) which may occur;
- Employing workers with a view to making them available to a third party entity, which assigns their tasks and supervises the execution of these tasks.

- 18. Remediation of child labourers:** All support and actions necessary to ensure the safety, health, education and development of children who have been subjected to child labour, as defined above, and whose work has been terminated.
- 19. Risk assessment:** A process to identify the health, safety and labour policies and practices of an organisation and to prioritise associated risks.
- 20. SA8000 worker representative(s):** One or more worker representative(s) freely elected by workers to facilitate communication with the management representative(s) and senior management on matters related to SA8000. In unionised facilities the worker representative(s) *shall* be from the recognised trade union(s), if they choose to serve. In cases where the union(s) does not appoint a representative or the organisation is not unionised, workers *may* freely elect the worker representative(s) for that purpose.
- 21. Social performance:** An organisation's achievement of full and sustained compliance with SA8000 while continually improving.
- 22. Stakeholder engagement:** The participation of interested parties, including but not limited to the organisation, trade unions, workers, worker organisations, suppliers, contractors, buyers, consumers, investors, NGOs, media and local and national government officials.
- 23. Supplier/subcontractor:** Any entity or individual(s) in the supply chain that directly provides the organisation with goods or services integral to, utilised in or for the production of the organisation's goods or services.
- 24. Sub-supplier:** Any entity or individual(s) in the supply chain that provides the supplier with goods and/or services integral to, utilised in or for the production of the supplier's or the organisation's goods or services.
- 25. Worker organisation:** An autonomous voluntary association of workers organised for the purpose of furthering and defending the rights and interests of workers.
- 26. Young worker:** Any worker under the age of 18 but over the age of a child, as defined above.

IV. Social Accountability Requirements

1. CHILD LABOUR

Criteria:

- 1.1 The organisation *shall* not engage in or support the use of child labour as defined above.
- 1.2 The organisation *shall* establish, document, maintain and effectively communicate to personnel and other interested parties, written policies and procedures for remediation of child labourers, and *shall* provide adequate financial and other support to enable such children to attend and remain in school until no longer a child as defined above.
- 1.3 The organisation *may* employ young workers, but where such young workers are subject to compulsory education laws, they *shall* work only outside of school hours. Under no circumstances *shall* any young worker's school, work and transportation time exceed a combined total of 10 hours per day, and in no case *shall* young workers work more than 8 hours a day. Young workers may not work during night hours.
- 1.4 The organisation *shall* not expose children or young workers to any situations – in or outside of the workplace – that are hazardous or unsafe to their physical and mental health and development.

2. FORCED OR COMPULSORY LABOUR

Criteria:

- 2.1 The organisation *shall* not engage in or support the use of forced or compulsory labour, including prison labour, as defined in Convention 29, *shall* not retain original identification papers and *shall* not require personnel to pay 'deposits' to the organisation upon commencing employment.
- 2.2 Neither the organisation nor any entity supplying labour to the organisation *shall* withhold any part of any personnel's salary, benefits, property or documents in order to force such personnel to continue working for the organisation.
- 2.3 The organisation *shall* ensure that no employment fees or costs are borne in whole or in part by workers.
- 2.4 Personnel *shall* have the right to leave the workplace premises after completing the standard workday and be free to terminate their employment provided that they give reasonable notice to their organisation.
- 2.5 Neither the organisation nor any entity supplying labour to the organisation *shall* engage in or support human trafficking.

3. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Criteria:

- 3.1** The organisation *shall* provide a safe and healthy workplace environment and *shall* take effective steps to prevent potential health and safety incidents and occupational injury or illness arising out of, associated with or occurring in the course of work. It *shall* minimise or eliminate, so far as is reasonably practicable, the causes of all hazards in the workplace environment, based upon the prevailing safety and health knowledge of the industry sector and of any specific hazards.
- 3.2** The organisation *shall* assess all the workplace risks to new, expectant and nursing mothers including those arising out of their work activity, to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to remove or reduce any risks to their health and safety.
- 3.3** Where hazards remain after effective minimisation or elimination of the causes of all hazards in the workplace environment, the organisation *shall* provide personnel with appropriate personal protective equipment as needed at its own expense. In the event of a work-related injury the organisation *shall* provide first aid and assist the worker in obtaining follow-up medical treatment.
- 3.4** The organisation *shall* appoint a senior management representative to be responsible for ensuring a safe and healthy workplace environment for all personnel and for implementing this Standard's Health and Safety requirements.
- 3.5** A Health and Safety Committee, comprised of a well-balanced group of management representatives and workers, *shall* be established and maintained. Unless otherwise specified by law, at least one worker member(s) on the Committee *shall* be by recognised trade union(s) representative(s), *if they choose to serve*. In cases where the union(s) does not appoint a representative or the organisation is not unionised, workers *shall* appoint a representative(s) as they deem appropriate. Its decisions *shall* be effectively communicated to all personnel. The Committee *shall* be trained and retrained periodically in order to be competently committed to continually improving the health and safety conditions in the workplace. It *shall* conduct formal, periodic occupational health and safety risk assessments to identify and then address current and potential health and safety hazards. Records of these assessments and corrective and preventive actions taken *shall* be kept.
- 3.6** The organisation *shall* provide to personnel, on a regular basis, effective health and safety training, including on-site training and, where needed, job-specific training. Such training *shall* also be repeated for new and reassigned personnel, where incidents have occurred, and when changes in technology and/or the introduction of new machinery present new risks to the health and safety of personnel.

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- 3.7** The organisation *shall* establish documented procedures to detect, prevent, minimise, eliminate or otherwise respond to potential risks to the health and safety of personnel. The organisation *shall* maintain written records of all health and safety incidents that occur in the workplace and in all residences and property provided by the organisation, whether it owns, leases or contracts the residences or property from a service provider.
- 3.8** The organisation *shall* provide, for use by all personnel, free access to: clean toilet facilities, potable water, suitable spaces for meal breaks, and, where applicable, sanitary facilities for food storage.
- 3.9** The organisation *shall* ensure that any dormitory facilities provided for personnel are clean, safe and meet their basic needs, whether it owns, leases or contracts the dormitories from a service provider.
- 3.10** All personnel *shall* have the right to remove themselves from imminent serious danger without seeking permission from the organisation.

4. FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION & RIGHT TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Criteria:

- 4.1** All personnel *shall* have the right to form, join and organise trade union(s) of their choice and to bargain collectively on their behalf with the organisation. The organisation *shall* respect this right and *shall* effectively inform personnel that they are free to join a worker organisation of their choosing without any negative consequences or retaliation from the organisation. The organisation *shall* not interfere in any way with the establishment, functioning or administration of workers' organisation(s) or collective bargaining.
- 4.2** In situations where the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining are restricted under law, the organisation *shall* allow workers to freely elect their own representatives.
- 4.3** The organisation *shall* ensure that union members, representatives of workers and any personnel engaged in organising workers are not subjected to discrimination, harassment, intimidation or retaliation for being union members, representative(s) of workers or engaged in organising workers, and that such representatives have access to their members in the workplace.

5. DISCRIMINATION

Criteria:

- 5.1** The organisation *shall* not engage in or support discrimination in hiring, remuneration, access to training, promotion, termination or retirement based on race, national or territorial or social origin, caste, birth, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, family responsibilities, marital

status, union membership, political opinions, age or any other condition that could give rise to discrimination.

- 5.2** The organisation *shall* not interfere with the exercise of personnel's rights to observe tenets or practices or to meet needs relating to race, national or social origin, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, family responsibilities, union membership, political opinions or any other condition that could give rise to discrimination.
- 5.3** The organisation *shall* not allow any behaviour that is threatening, abusive, exploitative or sexually coercive, including gestures, language and physical contact, in the workplace and in all residences and property provided by the organisation, whether it owns, leases or contracts the residences or property from a service provider.
- 5.4** The organisation *shall* not subject personnel to pregnancy or virginity tests under any circumstances.

6. DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES

Criterion:

- 6.1** The organisation *shall* treat all personnel with dignity and respect. The organisation *shall* not engage in or tolerate the use of corporal punishment, mental or physical coercion or verbal abuse of personnel. No harsh or inhumane treatment is allowed.

7. WORKING HOURS

Criteria:

- 7.1** The organisation *shall* comply with applicable laws, collective bargaining agreements (where applicable) and industry standards on working hours, breaks and public holidays. The normal work week, not including overtime, *shall* be defined by law but *shall* not exceed 48 hours.
- 7.2** Personnel *shall* be provided with at least one day off following every six consecutive days of working. Exceptions to this rule apply only where both of the following conditions exist:
- a) National law allows work time exceeding this limit; and
 - b) A freely negotiated collective bargaining agreement is in force that allows work time averaging, including adequate rest periods.
- 7.3** All overtime work *shall* be voluntary, except as provided in 7.4 below, *shall* not exceed 12 hours per week and *shall* not be requested on a regular basis.
- 7.4** In cases where overtime work is needed in order to meet short-term business demand and the organisation is party to a freely negotiated collective bargaining agreement representing a significant portion of its workforce, the organisation *may* require such overtime work in

accordance with such agreement. Any such agreement must comply with the other requirements of this Working Hours element.

8. REMUNERATION

Criteria:

- 8.1** The organisation *shall* respect the right of personnel to a living wage and ensure that wages for a normal work week, not including overtime, *shall* always meet at least legal or industry minimum standards, or collective bargaining agreements (where applicable). Wages *shall* be sufficient to meet the basic needs of personnel and to provide some discretionary income.
- 8.2** The organisation *shall* not make deductions from wages for disciplinary purposes. Exception to this rule applies only when both of the following conditions exist:
- a) Deductions from wages for disciplinary purposes are permitted by national law; and
 - b) A freely negotiated collective bargaining agreement is in force that permits this practice.
- 8.3** The organisation *shall* ensure that personnel's wages and benefits composition are detailed clearly and regularly to them in writing for each pay period. The organisation *shall* lawfully render all wages and benefits due in a manner convenient to workers, but in no circumstances in delayed or restricted forms, such as vouchers, coupons or promissory notes.
- 8.4** All overtime *shall* be reimbursed at a premium rate as defined by national law or established by a collective bargaining agreement. In countries where a premium rate for overtime is not regulated by law or there is no collective bargaining agreement, personnel *shall* be compensated for overtime at the organisation's premium rate or at a premium rate equal to prevailing industry standards, whichever is higher.
- 8.5** The organisation *shall* not use labour-only contracting arrangements, consecutive short-term contracts and/or false apprenticeship or other schemes to avoid meeting its obligations to personnel under applicable laws and regulations pertaining to labour and social security.

9. MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Criteria:

9.1 Policies, Procedures and Records

- 9.1.1** Senior management *shall* write a policy statement to inform personnel, in all appropriate languages, that it has chosen to comply with SA8000.
- 9.1.2** This policy statement *shall* include the organisation's commitment to conform to all requirements of the SA8000 Standard and to respect the international instruments as listed in the previous section on Normative Elements and Their Interpretation. The statement *shall* also commit the organisation to comply with: national laws, other applicable laws and other requirements to which the organisation subscribes.
- 9.1.3** This policy statement and the SA8000 Standard *shall* be prominently and conspicuously displayed, in appropriate and comprehensible form, in the workplace and in residences and property provided by the organisation, whether it owns, leases or contracts the residences or property from a service provider.
- 9.1.4** The organisation *shall* develop policies and procedures to implement the SA8000 Standard.
- 9.1.5** These policies and procedures *shall* be effectively communicated and made accessible to personnel in all appropriate languages. These communications *shall* also be clearly shared with customers, suppliers, sub-contractors and sub-suppliers.
- 9.1.6** The organisation *shall* maintain appropriate records to demonstrate conformance to and implementation of the SA8000 standard, including the Management System requirements contained in this element. Associated records *shall* be kept and written or oral summaries given to the SA8000 worker representative(s).
- 9.1.7** The organisation *shall* regularly conduct a management review of its policy statement, policies, procedures implementing this Standard and performance results, in order to continually improve.
- 9.1.8** The organisation *shall* make its policy statement publicly available in an effective form and manner to interested parties, upon request.

9.2 Social Performance Team

9.2.1 A Social Performance Team (SPT) *shall* be established to implement all elements of SA8000. The Team *shall* include a balanced representation of:

- a) SA8000 worker representative(s); and
- b) management.

Compliance accountability for the Standard *shall* solely rest with Senior Management.

9.2.2 In unionised facilities, worker representation on the SPT *shall* be by recognised trade union(s) representative(s), if they choose to serve. In cases where the union(s) does not appoint a representative or the organisation is not unionised, workers *may* freely elect one or more SA8000 worker representative(s) from among themselves for this purpose. In no circumstances *shall* the SA8000 worker representative(s) be seen as a substitute for trade union representation.

9.3 Identification and Assessment of Risks

9.3.1 The SPT *shall* conduct periodic written risk assessments to identify and prioritise the areas of actual or potential non-conformance to this Standard. It *shall* also recommend actions to Senior Management that address these risks. Actions to address these risks *shall* be prioritised according to their severity or where a delay in responding would make it impossible to address.

9.3.2 The SPT *shall* conduct these assessments based on their recommended data and data collection techniques and in meaningful consultation with interested parties.

9.4 Monitoring

9.4.1 The SPT *shall* effectively monitor workplace activities for:

- a) compliance with this Standard;
- b) implementation of actions to effectively address the risks identified by the SPT; and
- c) for the effectiveness of systems implemented to meet the organisation's policies and the requirements of this Standard.

It *shall* have the authority to collect information from or include interested parties (stakeholders) in its monitoring activities. It *shall* also liaise with other departments to study, define, analyse and/or address any possible non-conformance(s) to the SA8000 Standard.

9.4.2 The SPT *shall* also facilitate routine internal audits and produce reports for senior management on the performance and benefits of actions taken to meet the SA8000 Standard, including a record of corrective and preventive actions identified.

9.4.3 The SPT *shall* also hold periodic meetings to review progress and identify potential actions to strengthen implementation of the Standard.

9.5 Internal Involvement and Communication

- 9.5.1** The organisation *shall* demonstrate that personnel effectively understand the requirements of SA8000, and *shall* regularly communicate the requirements of SA8000 through routine communications.

9.6 Complaint Management and Resolution

- 9.6.1** The organisation *shall* establish a written grievance procedure that is confidential, unbiased, non-retaliatory and accessible and available to personnel and interested parties to make comments, recommendations, reports or complaints concerning the workplace and/or non-conformances to the SA8000 Standard.
- 9.6.2** The organisation *shall* have procedures for investigating, following up on and communicating the outcome of complaints concerning the workplace and/or non-conformances to this Standard or of its implementing policies and procedures. These results *shall* be freely available to all personnel and, upon request, to interested parties.
- 9.6.3** The organisation *shall* not discipline, dismiss or otherwise discriminate against any personnel or interested party for providing information on SA8000 compliance or for making other workplace complaints.

9.7 External Verification and Stakeholder Engagement

- 9.7.1** In the case of announced and unannounced audits for the purpose of certifying its compliance with the requirements of this Standard, the organisation *shall* fully cooperate with external auditors to determine the severity and frequency of any problems that arise in meeting the SA8000 Standard.
- 9.7.2** The organisation *shall* participate in stakeholder engagement in order to attain sustainable compliance with the SA8000 Standard.

9.8 Corrective and Preventive Actions

- 9.8.1** The organisation *shall* formulate policies and procedures for the prompt implementation of corrective and preventive actions and shall provide adequate resources for them. The SPT *shall* ensure that these actions are effectively implemented.
- 9.8.2** The SPT *shall* maintain records, including timelines, that list, at minimum, non-conformances related to SA8000, their root causes, the corrective and preventive actions taken and implementation results.

9.9 Training and Capacity Building

9.9.1 The organisation *shall* implement a training plan for all personnel to effectively implement the SA8000 Standard as informed by the results of risk assessments. The organisation *shall* periodically measure the effectiveness of training and record their nature and frequency.

9.10 Management of Suppliers and Contractors

9.10.1 The organisation *shall* conduct due diligence on its suppliers/subcontractors, private employment agencies and sub-suppliers' compliance with the SA8000 Standard. The same due diligence approach *shall* be applied when selecting new suppliers/subcontractors, private employment agencies and sub-suppliers. The minimum activities for the organisation to fulfil this requirement *shall* be recorded and *shall* include:

- a) effectively communicating the requirements of this Standard to senior leadership of suppliers/subcontractors, private employment agencies and sub-suppliers;
- b) assessing significant risks of non-conformance by suppliers/subcontractors, private employment agencies and sub-suppliers. [Note: an explanation of "significant risk" is found in the guidance document];
- c) making reasonable efforts to ensure that these significant risks are adequately addressed by suppliers/subcontractors, private employment agencies and sub-suppliers and by the organisation where and when appropriate, and prioritised according to the organisation's ability and resources to influence these entities; [Note: an explanation of "reasonable effort" is found in the guidance document]; and
- d) establishing monitoring activities and tracking performance of suppliers/subcontractors, private employment agencies and sub-suppliers to ensure that these significant risks are effectively addressed.

9.10.2 Where the organisation receives, handles or promotes goods and/or services from suppliers /subcontractors or sub-suppliers who are classified as home workers, the organisation *shall* take effective actions to ensure that such home workers are afforded a level of protection substantially equivalent to that afforded to the organisation's other workers under the requirements of this Standard.