Introduction

The Essex Business and Human Rights Project has the objective of combining university resources in research and knowledge transfer with the contemporary problems arising from the intersection of business with the demands of human rights, as well as those areas of environmental protection related to human rights.

The Project has carried on a range of activities. These include a series of seminars; the initiation of a research project; the provision of a legal brief in a major legal case; training; and complementing student academic work.

1. Seminars

Beginning in the second half of this academic year, the Project has organized seminars with members of the Business School; the Law School; and outside speakers. It aims at a series of meetings that develop a sub-theme within the broad area of business and human rights. This particular series has focused on socially responsible investment. The talks covered the following topics:

2010, February 10th: Steffen Böhm (Essex Business School) and Sheldon Leader (School of Law) on “Responsible International Investment? Lessons from the conflict over a pulp and paper industry case in South America”

2010, February 16th: Nick Hildyard (The Corner House) on “The Impact of Investor State Agreements on Human Rights”


2010, March 11th: Sabine Michalowski (School of Law) “Complicity with Human Rights violations: the role of international banks”
2010, March 17\textsuperscript{th}: Peter Frankenthal (Amnesty International UK) on "Corporate Accountability for Human Rights - is a UN Special Procedure the Way Forward?"

2010, March 18\textsuperscript{th}: Gabriela Quijano (Amnesty International, IS, London) on "Relationships between parent companies and subsidiaries including piercing the corporate veil"

2010, March 24\textsuperscript{th}: panel discussion with Kevin Boyle, Wolfgang Kaleck, Sabine Michalowski and Clara Sandoval on “Financing Gross Human Rights Violations: International Banks, Complicity and the case of Argentina” (joint event with Essex Transitional Justice Network)

2010, May 26\textsuperscript{th}: Daniel Leader (Leigh Day & Co.) "Pursuing complaints against multi-nationals within the OECD-framework. A practitioner's view"

2010, June 2\textsuperscript{nd}: Salil Tripathi (Institute for Human Rights and Business), Business and human rights: Beyond Voluntarism, Towards Accountability.

**Forthcoming seminars/symposia:**

The Project is collaborating in two symposia.

\textbf{a/ Symposium on Business and Human Rights, 17/ 18 September 2010:} This is an event sponsored by the Law Society of England and Wales and the Essex Human Rights Centre. Several individuals associated with the Business and Human Rights Project are participating: Sheldon Leader has prepared the structure and content of topics for the Symposium and will participate in two panels. David Ong; Youseph Farah; Jim Gobert and Sabine Michalowski are also participating in panels. Tony Fisher, representing the Law Society in organizing the symposium, is a member of the Advisory Panel for the Project. The Project welcomes collaborative activities of this sort.

\textbf{b/ Conference in Kosovo: 6/7 July 2010.} ‘Property Rights and Strategies for Economic and Social Development in Kosovo’. Faculty associated with the Business and Human Rights Project have collaborated on this conference, organized by the Essex Human Rights Centre and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Sheldon
Leader has prepared the structure and content of topics for the meeting, and he and David Ong, will be participating in the panels. Leader is also helping Essex students to prepare background documentation and analysis for participants in the Conference.

**Further seminars**

**Seminar on 21 October 2010: ‘Food Security and Global Commodity Markets’** Neil Kellard (Essex Business School)

A seminar will be held on the theme: ‘The structure of multinational corporations and responsibility for environmental damage: the case of BP’ Date to be arranged.

Further seminars are being planned for the coming academic year. Suggestions are welcome. In addition to the speaker series, there will be meetings on specific topics of common research interest. The theme of ‘risks to business and risks to rights’ has been identified, and other suggestions are welcome.

2. **Research in Kosovo in partnership with OSCE**

The Project has brought together three members of staff and two doctoral students to work in Kosovo in collaboration with the OSCE on the theme of social conflict and foreign direct investment. The project involves close investigation of the structure of investment decisions and their potentially positive and negative impacts on social conflict in the region. The field work will involve evidence collected on the ground by local officials with OSCE together with Essex researchers. Along with published academic outputs, the project aims to generate elements for an investor’s code of practice for work in the region. Essex participants in this work are Todd Landman, Sheldon Leader, David Ong, Sylvia Meichsner, and Tara van Ho.

3. **Training**

As part of the Kosovo research there will be a component of training for local OSCE officials.

4. **Legal Brief**

The Project has coordinated the contributions of three members of the academic staff (Sabine Michalowski, Youseph Farah, and Sheldon
Leader) as well as three LLM students (Cicek Gockun; Amanda M Reiss; Christopher Kip) on a legal brief in an important case concerning complicity of international banks with human rights abuses in Argentina. Brief submitted March 2010. This was collaboration with the Essex Transitional Justice Network.

5. Consultancy: China/Democratic Republic of Congo Investment

The NGO Global Witness plans to publish in the coming months a report on the human rights and environmental impacts of investment by Chinese enterprises in the DRC based in part on an analysis carried out by three members of the Project: Judith Schoensteiner, Rasmiya Kazimova, and Sheldon Leader.

Previous work of this kind, involving other industries and regions, has been carried out by Leader, Farah, Kazimova, and Schoensteiner.

The Project welcomes proposals for further work along these lines.

6. Collaboration in the establishment of a UK Commission on Business and Human Rights

The Project is collaborating with the Corporate Responsibility Coalition (CORE) coalition of NGOs working on the establishment of a UK Commission on Business and Human Rights. It is partner with CORE on an Essex University sponsored scheme for knowledge transfer.

7. Student participation

Students have been able to pursue themes that are relevant to their coursework and dissertation via contribution to the work with NGOs on the amicus brief for the Argentina litigation mentioned above, as well as contribution to the research project in Kosovo.

8. International collaboration planned

In the coming months, collaborative relationships will be explored with
Chile: The Human Rights Centre at Diego Portalis University in Santiago. There is an interest in collaborative work on foreign direct investment and human rights impact assessments.

Kosovo: During the work to be carried out in Kosovo, further projects will be explored with local NGOs and with organizations such as the OSCE.

South Africa: The Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria. Collaboration on infrastructure projects and ethnic conflict will be explored.

9. Project Website

A website for the Project has now been established, and can be found at http://www.essex.ac.uk/ebhr/

10. Plans for the coming year

The Project will continue to encourage staff and students in work on themes of research and practical interest. As indicated above there are plans for new seminars, new research issues, and training, some of this via international partnerships being set up.

11. Project Associates

Prof. Sheldon Leader, Essex School of Law (Director)
Dr. Steffen Böhm Essex Business School (Deputy Director)
Sylvia Meichsner (Project Administration and Research)
Dr. David Ong, Essex School of Law
Dr. Hardy Thomas, Essex Business School
Youseph Farah, Essex School of Law
Dr. Sabine Michalowski, Essex School of Law
Dr. Clara Sandoval, Essex School of Law
Prof. Prem Sikka, Essex Business School
Prof. Paul Hunt, Essex School of Law
Judith Schoensteiner, lecturer, Diego Portalis University, Santiago, Chile
Rasmiya Kazimova, Investment and Human Rights Consultant
Tara van Ho, Attorney at Law