

SA8000[®]:2025

International Standard for Decent Work

Standard Revision Terms of Reference

1. Intent & Scope of the Standard

Intent: Based on contemporary international and national human rights norms and laws, SA8000:2025 describes principles and criteria of decent work and effective management systems that reflect society's expectations for responsible business. As a voluntary international standard, SA8000:2025 provides a verifiable and implementable framework for organizations to respect the rights of workers through effective governance, management, due diligence, and continual improvement. In doing so, it provides a framework to guide policy makers, regulators, investors, civil society, unions, and other stakeholders in their efforts to promote and enable respect for workers' rights by organizations. SA8000:2025 incorporates and defines key elements of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, ILO Conventions, UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights, and OECD Guidelines for Due Diligence, integrating universally applicable management system principles.

Scope: SA8000:2025 is universally applicable to every type of organization, regardless of size, location, industry, or maturity. It applies to an organization's potential and actual impacts on decent work through its actions, operations, and business relationships.

Section 1: Management Systems: Governance and Due Diligence – Principles and criteria for how organizations should fulfill decent work expectations in their operations and business relationships.

Section 2: Decent Work – Principles and criteria of good labor performance by an organization in its operations and business relationships.

Future sections may expand the scope to encompass other areas of human rights.

2. Sustainability Outcomes

At the organization level, SA8000:2025 aims to:

- Promote effective, ongoing management of risks and impacts to workers' rights in the organization and its business relationships;
- Prevent, mitigate, and remediate risks and impacts to workers' rights; and
- Continually improve conditions and outcomes for the organization's and its business partners' workers and their families.

More broadly, SA8000:2025 aims to provide a robust framework to guide public, private, and civil actors in their efforts to promote and protect workers' rights, thus creating a better enabling environment for businesses to respect workers' rights.

3. Need for the Standard and Revision

The international community has defined human rights of people and communities—applicable everywhere in the world.

The UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights have established a framework for ensuring that the private acts of organizations do not infringe on the rights of people and communities. I) States have an obligation to protect and fulfill these rights through policy, legislation, regulation, and adjudication. II) Businesses must respect these rights in their own operations and those they are linked to through business relationships. III) States and businesses are obliged to provide or participate in, respectively, effective remedies for rights abuses.

The OECD has established a framework for multi-national enterprises to conduct effective due diligence to meet their obligations under the UNGPs. Governments in many corners of the world are increasingly setting policy and regulations based on these international expectations for responsible business conduct and consumers increasingly expect business to behave ethically.

Building on these foundational documents and expectations, SA8000:2025 establishes an implementable and verifiable standard specifying the performance and management criteria that organizations of any size, industry, and maturity level must meet to fulfill their obligations, through a good governance, management systems, and due diligence approach.

SA8000 set the global standard for decent work when it was created in 1997 as the first auditable labor standard. It has since been adopted, adapted, and referenced in countless other standards, codes of conduct, regulations, and elsewhere as a seminal resource for decent work requirements. The landscape of global trade and the world of work have shifted significantly in this time, bringing new risks and expectations. With this major revision, SAI aims to again set the bar for decent work.

4. Sustainability Claims

The SA8000 Standard is the underlying framework for many SAI products; specific sustainability claims depend on the product. We will develop and share sustainability claim guidance for SA8000:2025 at the product level as it is adopted and incorporated throughout our work.

5. Revision Process

5.1. Objectives

Like previous versions, SA8000:2025 provides a voluntary and implementable standard for third-party verification of decent work principles and criteria at the organization level. This revision broadens the standard's scope in multiple ways and introduces a progressive assessment structure.

- **Global Vision:** While all previous versions have been code-agnostic and applicable to most organizations, the new standard is even broader—establishing a global vision to guide public, civil society, and private sector actors of all types, and at all levels of global value chains, in their efforts to promote, protect, and advocate for workers’ rights.
- **Positive Framing and Comprehensive Approach:** SA8000:2025 describes a positive vision for the future of decent work, which needs to be upheld by governments and business. Where previous versions of this Standard were framed around non-conformance, the 2024 revision emphasizes performance—what organizations should be doing to fulfill their duty to respect workers’ rights. SA8000:2025 is designed first and foremost as a tool to guide organizations to implement holistic management systems based on principles of due diligence and good governance. Auditing and certification are two tools, among many others, that can be used with this standard to support effective implementation.
- **Progressive Scoring:** This revision enables a scoring methodology for assessment, which will allow organizations at any level to understand, given their specific context and responsibility, their current performance and maturity and how they can improve. SAI will offer a range of products for organizations at different levels of decent work performance and system maturity. This will allow organizations to participate in SAI capacity building programs and begin working toward implementation of the standard, irrespective of maturity or performance level.
- **Refining and Clarifying Management Systems:** SA8000 has always been a management system standard. This was further codified in the 2014 revision, which introduced Social Fingerprint for SA8000. In this revision, we have refined the Social Fingerprint framework to add more clarity and structure around how organizations can demonstrate good management system practices, to ensure the requirements are sufficiently flexible and relevant to organizations of all types, and to better align with other international management system standards.
- **Clarifying Organizational Responsibility:** Where previous versions of the Standard focused on an organization’s own operations and supply chain as separate processes, SA8000:2025 clarifies the organization’s responsibility to take an integrated approach to proactively prevent, mitigate, and remediate risks and impacts related to decent work that they cause, contribute to, or are directly linked to through their business relationships (aligned with the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights).
- **Addressing Emerging Challenges and Opportunities:** As with previous revisions, this revision updates the Standard in response to emerging risks, challenges, and opportunities.

5.2. Process and Timeline

Following internal drafting and review, SAI is taking the following steps to finalize the Standard:

1. **Public comment period and webinars** (September 16-November 15, 2024)

- a. The full draft Standard will be made public for commenting for a period of 60 days. During this period, the Standard will be open for anyone to review, and reviewers will be able to submit comments, questions, and feedback to SAI through multiple channels, including by email.
 - b. SAI will hold public webinars in multiple languages and time zones during the first two weeks of the public comment period to provide details about the revision process, the draft Standard, and how to review and provide feedback. Webinars will be recorded and made available online for those who cannot attend live. [View dates and register](#).
 - c. As needed to ensure effective representation of all relevant perspectives, SAI will also hold consultations with key stakeholders throughout this period.
2. **Consultations with external experts** (September-November 2024) – Interviews and correspondence with invited stakeholders to address specific questions, concerns, and uncertainties in their areas of expertise.
 3. **Committee of Experts Review** (September-October 2024) – SAI will convene experts and stakeholders for multi-stakeholder review of the draft Standard and feedback received.
 4. **Publication of SA8000:2025** in early 2025.

At that time, SAI will begin the next phase of the revision project—determining thresholds for application in specific programs and services, such as SA8000 Certification. SAI will undertake another consultative process in making those determinations, which will lead to publication of the SA8000 Certification documents by the end of 2025.

This timeline may be adjusted if additional rounds of public comment are needed.

5.3. Decision-making procedures

All feedback received will be reviewed with third-party experts. The SAI Standard Technical Committee will make relevant changes to the Standard. Decisions will be made by consensus.

While we may not be able to respond directly to all comments and suggestions, we will publish summaries of feedback received and our decision-making process on the SAI website and share directly to those who submitted comments.

5.4. Participation

SAI is committed to an inclusive and transparent revision process that includes all relevant stakeholders, especially those often left out of or under-represented in international and corporate dialogue. At each stage of public review, we will proactively seek input from workers and their advocates, small business owners and their representatives at all levels of the value chain, government agencies, and community advocates, especially those with personal experience and insight on abuses of workers' rights by organizations. We are further committed to ensuring adequate representation from all areas of the world and a wide range of industries.

If you would like to participate in some way, or to nominate a person or organization to participate, please reach out to communications@sa-intl.org.