Microsoft Generative AI HRIA Executive Summary

Introduction

As outlined in its [Global Human Rights Statement](#), Microsoft is committed to respecting human rights across its value chain. The company integrates human rights considerations into its corporate policies, due diligence processes, and product development practices. This includes efforts to assess and address potential human rights impacts associated with emerging technologies, such as generative AI.

To support this commitment, Microsoft partnered with [Article One](#) between September 2024 and April 2025 to conduct a human rights impact assessment (HRIA) of its development and deployment of generative AI technologies. This report represents a summary of the full HRIA report produced for Microsoft.[1]

The HRIA is grounded in international human rights instruments, including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and relevant conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). These instruments served as the foundation for identifying potential human rights impacts and assessing Microsoft's responsibilities in relation to generative AI, including evaluating existing management practices for responding to potential human rights impacts.

HRIAs reflect a specific moment in time for a company and its technologies. With rapidly evolving technology like generative AI, Microsoft continually assesses emerging risks, and, consistent with its commitment to ongoing due diligence, conducts targeted HRIAs to identify and mitigate those risks.

Key findings

Based on the inherent risks of the AI and technology sector, as well as those specific to Microsoft's operations, products, and services, Article One identified five salient human rights impact areas:

1 Responsible AI development

The development of generative AI technologies may introduce or exacerbate potential human rights impacts through various aspects of the design process, such as training data and algorithmic development. Two priority impact areas that are significant to Responsible AI Development are:

1) bias in the design and development process; and

2) AI hallucinations.

These impacts may infringe primarily on the **right to freedom from discrimination (UDHR 2)** and **to freedom of opinion and expression (UDHR 19).**

2 Responsible AI deployment

Misuse of generative AI technologies can increase human rights risks by making abusive, misleading, or otherwise detrimental actions easier and faster to carry out, as well as more accessible. Misuse may be at the hands of government actors (e.g., surveillance, censorship or scaling disinformation campaigns) or bad actors seeking to use the technology for illegal uses (e.g., child sexual abuse material) or to compromise AI

systems. These impacts may infringe primarily on the rights to **freedom from discrimination (UDHR 2), safety and security (UDHR 3), freedom from slavery (UDHR 4), a child's freedom from exploitation (CRC 19), privacy (UDHR 12), freedom of expression (UDHR 19), select government (UDHR 21),** and **an adequate standard of living (UDHR 21.1).**

3   AI supply chain working conditions

Potential impacts in the generative AI supply chain mainly center around the working conditions of data enrichment and datacenter workers, often employed by third parties. Risks surfaced as part of the HRIA include inadequate wages or unpaid labor and unsafe working conditions (e.g., data center workers exposed to physical hazards, such as arc flashes and electrical explosions), which may infringe primarily on the rights to **just and favorable conditions of work (UDHR 23.1), fair remuneration (UDHR 23),** and **an adequate standard of living (UDHR 25.1).**

4   Clean, healthy, and sustainable environment

Training and operating generative AI relies on datacenters. As the datacenter footprint grows, there are human rights and environmental risks if development is not paired with rigorous and responsible planning, including the use of clean energy. For example, in regions with constrained water resources or aging grids, increased demand could strain local systems, contribute to higher utility costs, or exacerbate existing environmental pressures. Uneven infrastructure investment may also deepen global disparities in access to AI and digital services, creating the risk of a widening technological divide. At the same time, datacenter deployment—when accompanied by renewable energy procurement, advanced cooling approaches, and partnership with local authorities on grid and water resilience—can help modernize infrastructure and expand equitable access to technology. These considerations relate primarily to the **right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment (RES 48/13)** and **the right to water (RES 64/292).**

5   AI inclusion

Generative AI technologies raise important concerns around inclusion, particularly related to who has access to these tools and who is involved in shaping them. Concerns around inclusion include the growing digital divide, where millions in unserved and underserved communities lack reliable internet connectivity and the underrepresentation of marginalized groups in the development process, which can result in technologies that overlook or inadequately serve varied communities. These impacts may infringe primarily on the rights to **freedom from discrimination (UDHR 2), work (UDHR 23.1),** and **an adequate standard of living (UDHR 25.1).**

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the HRIA, Article One proposed several actions in the full HRIA report to strengthen Microsoft's overall human rights governance of responsible AI. Strong management practices—such as policies, user transparency, governance boards, and tools to support this work—help to ensure that companies can both respond to current risks and proactively identify and address emerging issues over time.

Microsoft

1 This assessment predates and is independent from Microsoft's investigation into allegations that its technology was used for mass surveillance of civilians during armed conflict. That investigation is ongoing as of the date of publication of this executive summary.