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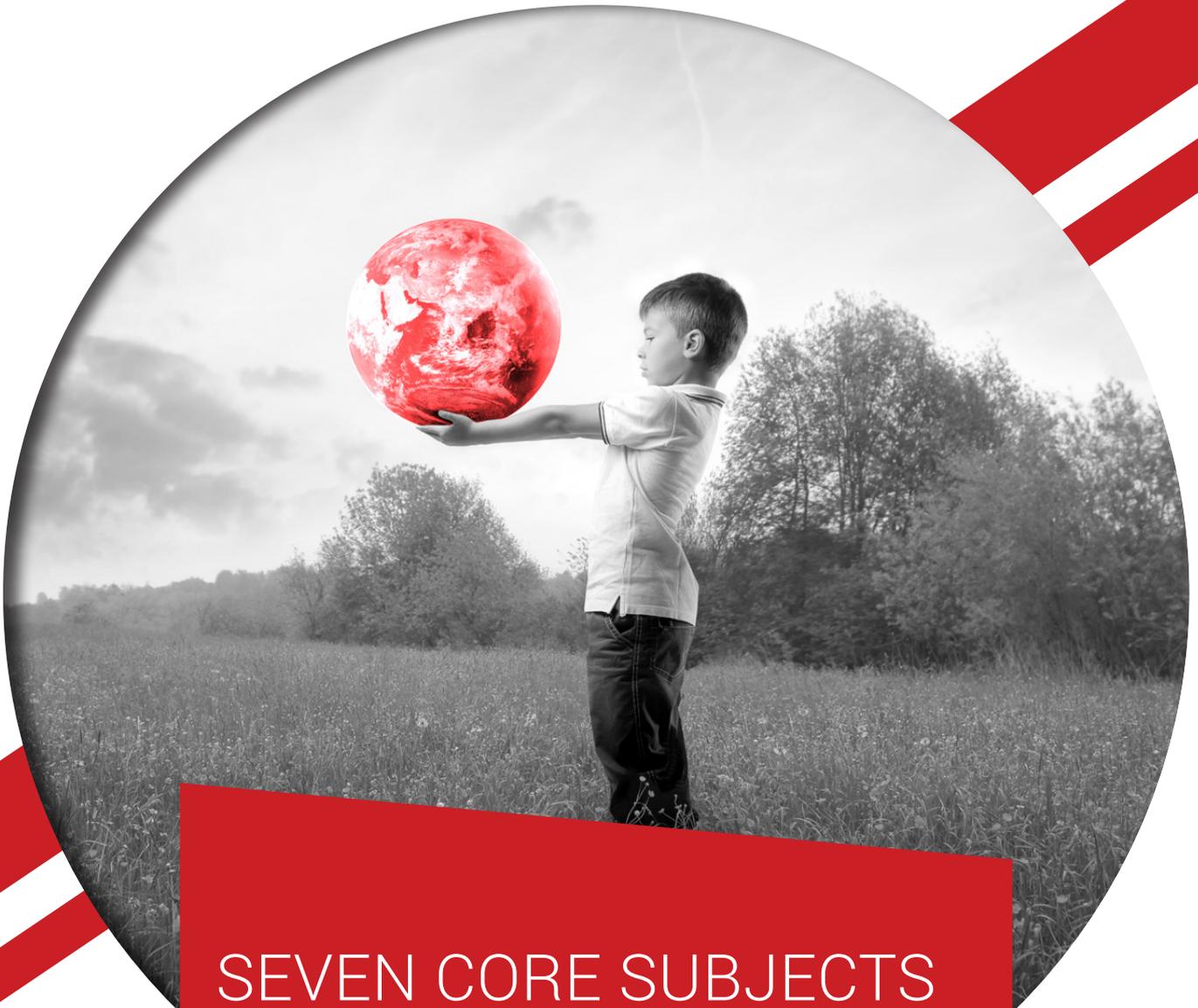
SEVEN CORE SUBJECTS COVERED BY ISO 26000

Understanding the concept of social responsibility

Various aspects of social responsibility were the subject of action by organizations as far back as the late 19th century, but the term 'social responsibility' came into common use in the early '70s. At the beginning, the primary focus was put on business responsibilities to society, and that is why the term that appeared to be used was "Corporate Social Responsibility" (CSR). Despite the large number of literary materials discussing the concept of corporate social responsibility, there was not any clear definition, and significant differences between the definitions purposed existed.

ISO definition

Social responsibility is defined as the responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on the society and environment, through transparent and ethical behavior that:
- contributes to sustainable development, including health and welfare of the society;
- takes into account the expectations of stakeholders;
- is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behavior; and
- is integrated throughout the organization and practised in its relationships.

Core subjects and issues of social responsibility
ISO 26000 has identified seven core subjects that reflect a current view of social responsibility good practices. These views will certainly change in the future, and additional issues may arise as important elements of social responsibility.

Clause 6 of ISO 26000:2010 regards the core subjects of social responsibility. Each of these core subjects includes a variety of issues that will enable an organization to identify its main impacts on society.

These core subjects are as follows:

1. Organizational Governance is the system by which an organization makes and implements decisions in pursuit of its objectives. This is the most crucial factor in enabling an organization to take responsibility for the impacts of its decisions and activities. It should be the starting point for integrating social responsibility throughout the organization. Effective governance should be based on incorporating the principles of social responsibility (accountability, transparency, ethical behavior, etc.) into decision making and implementation.

2. Human Rights are the basic rights to which all human beings are entitled. There are two broad categories of human rights. The first category concerns civil and political rights and includes such rights as the right to life and liberty, equality before the law and freedom of expression. The second category concerns economic, social and cultural rights and includes such rights as the right to work, the right to food, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, the right to education and the right to social security. Issues concerned regarding to human rights are due diligence; human rights risk situations; avoidance of complicity; resolving grievances; discrimination and vulnerable groups; civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights; fundamental principles and rights at work.

3. Labor Practices is a term that encompass all the policies and practices relating to work performed on behalf of the organization, including the recruitment and promotion of workers; disciplinary and grievance procedures; transfer and relocation of workers; termination of employment; training and skills development; health, safety and industrial hygiene; and any policy or practice affecting work conditions. The most important socio-economic contributions of an organization are the creation of jobs, wages and other compensation forms of payment, for the work performed, amongst others.

4. Environmental Responsibility is a precondition for the survival and prosperity of human beings. As the global population and global consumption continue to increase, several environmental and social threats are posed. Pollution, use of natural resources, climate changes, destruction of natural habitats, and loss of biodiversity are some of the environmental issues covered by ISO 26000. In the last few years, many organizations are taking steps toward becoming environmentally and socially responsible.

5. Fair Operating Practices concern the way an organization uses its relationships with other organizations to promote positive outcomes. These include relationships between organizations and government agencies, as well as between organizations and their partners, suppliers, contractors, customers, competitors, and associations which they belong to. Fair operating practice issues covered by ISO 26000 are anti-corruption; responsibility for political involvement; fair competition; promoting social responsibility in the value chain; and respect for property rights.

6. Consumer Issues regarding the social responsibility are related to, among other matters, fair marketing practices, protection of health and safety, sustainable consumption, dispute resolution and redress, data and privacy protection, access to essential products and services, reference the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers, and education.

7. Community Involvement and Development are two of the most important initiatives that all the organizations, public and private, can take towards developing a sustainable society. Social responsibility issues through which an organization can contribute to their communities include their involvement in and support for civil institutions, promotion of culture and education, creation of employment opportunities and provision of full and safe access to modern technology. It can also contribute through social investment, wealth and income creation and health promotion.

Conclusion

ISO 26000:2010 is an international standard that provides guidance on the underlying principles of social responsibility, the core subjects and issues pertaining to social responsibility and on ways to integrate socially responsible behavior into the organization. Since social responsibility contributes directly to sustainable development of a country, organizations around the world are taking steps toward becoming more socially responsible, by using ISO 26000. The increasing awareness of the need for and benefits of socially responsible behavior are increasing the necessity for experts in this field.

PECB (Professional Evaluation and Certification Board) is a personnel certification body for a wide range of professional standards. It offers ISO 26000 training and certification services for professionals wanting to gain a comprehensive knowledge in social responsibility, its principles, core subjects and issues, project managers or consultants wanting to prepare and to support an organization in the integration of a social responsibility program throughout the organization, auditors wanting to perform and lead a social responsibility program certification audits, and staff involved in the implementation of the ISO 26000 standard.

ISO 26000 and Social Responsibility Trainings offered by PECB:
- Certified ISO 26000 Lead Implementer (5 days)
- Certified ISO 26000 Lead Auditor (5 days)
- Certified ISO 26000 Foundation (2 days)
- OHSAS ISO 26000 Introduction (1 day)

ISO 26000 Lead Auditor, ISO 26000 Lead Implementer and ISO 26000 Master are three certification schemes accredited by ANSI ISO/IEC 17024.

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