

Going further on living wages: From commitment to systemic impact

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Living wages have moved from aspiration to expectation for responsible business practice. Many are now familiar with the first steps of understanding what a living wage is - accessing benchmarks and assessing wage gaps.

These foundations are essential, but they are not the end of the journey. As momentum grows, a key question is emerging:

What else can leading organisations do to accelerate progress on living wages globally and support local living wage movements?

Paying a living wage is a critical starting point but employers also need to play a wider leadership role; using their influence, partnerships and resources to strengthen the living wage movement for sustained impact and growth.

A worker's ability to achieve a decent standard of living depends on more than their hourly pay alone. Unpredictable hours, insecure contracts and inadequate retirement provision can all undermine the positive impact of higher wages.

This blog explores how companies can go further; strengthening pay security through fair working hours and pensions, using their leadership and helping to build the systems that make living wages achievable at scale.

Beyond wage rates



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HOURS**

Strengthening income security with Living Hours

One of the most practical ways employers can go further is by addressing working time insecurity.

The Living Wage Foundation's (LWF) Living Hours accreditation focuses on ensuring that workers receive:

- A contract that accurately reflects hours worked
- At least four weeks' shift notice, with any shifts cancelled within that timeframe paid in full
- Guaranteed minimum of 16 hours per week for all who want it

For many low-paid and outsourced workers, variable or zero-hours contracts mean that even a living wage rate does not translate into a reliable living income. Living Hours helps close this gap by giving workers greater predictability and stability, enabling them to budget, plan and rely on their earnings.



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PENSION**

Looking long-term with Living Pensions

Going further on living wages also means looking beyond today's pay packet. LWF's Living Pension accreditation encourages employers to ensure that workers can save adequately for retirement. This typically involves higher employer pension contributions than statutory minimums, targeted at those least able to save.

While pensions are often overlooked in action on fair pay, inadequate retirement provision can entrench inequality over a lifetime. As expectations around fair pay increasingly consider long-term outcomes, Living Pensions help employers take a more holistic view of financial security and fairness.



Leadership: advocacy and knowledge sharing

Individual company action is essential, but systemic change requires collective effort. Businesses can use their influence to support living wages beyond their own operations by:

1

Sharing lessons learned with peers, suppliers and industry groups, including practical insights on implementation

2

Advocating for stronger wage-setting mechanisms, such as adequate minimum wages and collective bargaining, to create a level playing field

3

Engaging investors, buyers and boards to normalise living wages as a business expectation rather than an exception

Advocacy and collective action represent a more advanced stage of leadership, helping to accelerate progress on living wages across entire industries and geographies.





Enabling scale through better data and tools

As momentum on living wages grows, greater alignment across data, tools and guidance is becoming a key enabler of progress.

Many businesses continue to navigate multiple methodologies and inconsistent benchmarks which can slow decision-making and divert effort away from implementation.

WageMap are helping to improve transparency and comparability across existing living wage estimates, and companies can support this work in practical ways; from providing feedback on the data to funding its ongoing development.

At the same time, organisations such as IDH and the UN Global Compact are developing shared tools, guidance and training to support living wage implementation in supply chains, while WBCSD is coordinating work to strengthen a more data-driven business case for living wages, with greater emphasis on quantitative impacts alongside qualitative outcomes.

By contributing insight, feedback, advocacy and/or funding to these collaborative efforts, companies can reduce duplication, strengthen credibility and help catalyse progress well beyond their own operations.

Investing locally for lasting impact

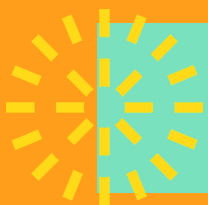


Sustainable progress is built locally. Civil society organisations play a critical role in developing credible benchmarks, convening stakeholders and embedding living wages within national contexts.

Supporting local living wage movements can be one of the most effective ways for businesses and philanthropies to address working poverty sustainably. Unlike short-term aid, living wages strengthen local economies, institutions and worker voice.

For global companies, this can involve:

- Funding or partnering with in-country living wage initiatives
- Supporting capacity building for worker and employer organisations
- Aligning corporate action with locally-led solutions that last beyond individual programmes



Read the article [here](#) and see more information on locally led living wage movements [here](#)

Moving from compliance to contribution

Living wages are increasingly embedded in due-diligence expectations, ratings and regulation. But the organisations making the greatest impact are those that move beyond compliance, using their influence, resources and partnerships to strengthen the systems that make fair pay possible.

Going further on living wages means asking not only “Are we paying a living wage?” but also:

- *Are workers able to earn a stable and predictable living income?*
- *Are we supporting long-term financial security, not just short-term pay?*
- *Are we contributing to the conditions that enable living wages at scale?*

By combining wage commitments with Living Hours, Living Pensions, advocacy, collaboration and local investment, businesses can help turn living wages from isolated good practice into a durable global norm.





Please keep in touch

If you'd like to explore how these approaches align with your wider sustainability strategy, the Living Wage Foundation are happy to support further conversations.

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