



**GIFCT**  
Global Internet Forum  
to Counter Terrorism



**BSR**

# VULNERABLE GROUPS FRAMEWORK

## **Purpose:**

This document provides (1) a framework for identifying vulnerable or marginalized groups and (2) a list of common groups that are at heightened risk of being vulnerable or marginalized.

This document should be used as part of human rights due diligence, to consider how individuals from groups or populations that may be at heightened risk of becoming vulnerable or marginalized may experience different or disproportionate adverse human rights impacts.

## **Accompanying Resources:**

The document can be used alongside the following resources:

- Human Rights due diligence tool
- List of human rights
- Modules 1 and 3 of the GIFCT human rights training

## FRAMEWORK FOR IDENTIFYING VULNERABLE GROUPS

BSR has developed a framework based on the UNGPs and other international standards to help companies identify vulnerable groups they may impact. The framework includes four dimensions of vulnerability:

- **Practical Discrimination:** Those who face discrimination due to their life circumstances (e.g. homelessness, illiteracy, speaking underrepresented languages)
- **Formal Discrimination:** Those who experience discrimination due to laws or policies that prioritize one group over another (e.g. gender, political groups)
- **Hidden Groups:** Those who have to hide their identity and consequently cannot be vocal about their rights (e.g. LGBTQIA+, HIV/AIDs, undocumented migrants)
- **Societal Discrimination:** Those who face discrimination due to cultural or societal practices or minority group identity (e.g. women, racial or religious groups, indigenous peoples)

## LIST OF COMMON VULNERABLE GROUPS

Vulnerability can change depending on context—for example, based on the geographic context or based on the user population for a product. It is possible for groups that are powerful in one context to be vulnerable in another. Nevertheless, the below list of common vulnerable groups can be used as a starting point to identify those that are most relevant for your company and the context in question.

- Women and girls
- Children and teens
- People with disabilities
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Religious minorities
- Linguistic minorities
- LGBTQIA+ people
- Older people
- People with lower digital literacy
- Migrants and asylum seekers
- Unhoused people
- Indigenous people
- Resource constrained communities
- Political dissidents
- Human rights defenders
- Sex workers