



Children's Principles for Business

UNICEF, the UN Global Compact and Save the Children are launching a process to develop a set of principles offering concrete guidance on what business can do to respect and support children's rights. Currently, no comprehensive principles exist to guide business on the full range of actions they can take to respect and support children's rights within their sphere of influence.

The principles will enable business to become a positive force for children. They will provide a coherent set of considerations that business can apply throughout their operations, whether in the workplace, marketplace or community, to maximize the positive impacts and avoid the negative impacts that their activities may have on children. Recognizing the important contribution that business can have in shaping these principles and ensuring their relevance to business operations, the partners will launch an extensive multi-stakeholder consultation process and invite business from across sectors and geographic regions to be fully engaged from the outset in the process for the development of the Principles. The Children's Principles will be released in 2011 – marking a historic first in the history of business and Child Rights.

Rationale:

Children have rights, the nearly universally ratified Convention on The Rights of the Child (1989), spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere have: the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. The four core principles of the Convention are non-discrimination; ensuring the best interests of the child; the right to life; survival and development, and respect for the views of the child.

Business has an enormous potential to impact children's lives, both positively and negatively through their operations, products, marketing practices and other activities. Everyone has a role to play in taking action to respect and support children's rights. For business, children are an important stakeholder as current consumers or future employees, employers, suppliers, community members and leaders etc... While the business and human rights agenda has evolved significantly in recent years, a child rights perspective has rarely been applied to discussions regarding the human rights responsibilities of business or the duties of government to regulate business practices with regard to human rights. Those initiatives that exist that have been designed to address children within the private sector have been focused on specific issues such as child labour or the sexual exploitation of children; extensive guidance exists on how business can avoid contributing to the problem and help combat it. However, currently, no comprehensive principles exist to guide business on the full range of actions companies can take to respect and support children's rights within their sphere of influence.

The Principles will serve as a unifying framework and reference point for existing and future initiatives concerning business and children. They will help elaborate Principles 1 and 2 of the UN Global Compact, which ask business to respect and support human rights and not be complicit in human rights abuse. However, the Principles will seek to be relevant to business whether or not they are participants in the UN Global Compact.



Process:

A Steering Committee has been established with representation from each of the partnering organizations to lead the conceptualizing, planning and execution of all stages of the development of the principles. A project manager will coordinate the project on behalf of Steering Committee members. The development of the principles will be informed by desk research, interviews & surveys and a multi-stakeholder Expert Reference Group providing inputs on Child Rights and best practices in Corporate Responsibility. An extensive consultation process with stakeholders globally will be launched including business, academia, human & child rights specialists, socially responsible investors, as well as with children and youth themselves.

Timeline:

An announcement about the launch of the Process to develop the Principles will be made during the Global Compact Business Leader's Summit in NY 24/25 June 2010. It is anticipated that the final principles will be issued during 2011

How to get involved:

For further information regarding the initiative and how to become involved, please email the dedicated mailbox childrensprinciples@unglobalcompact.org

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