

THE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND BUSINESS PRINCIPLES IN CONTEXT



"The Children's Rights and Business Principles are an important effort to explore the implications of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights for the human rights of children. Children are among the most marginalized and vulnerable members of society, and can be disproportionately, severely and permanently impacted by business activities, operations and relationships."

Professor John Ruggie, former UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Business and Human Rights

KEY CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND BUSINESS LINKAGES



While it has long been clear that companies have a responsibility for the ways in which they impact children's lives, the 2012 release of the Children's Rights and Business Principles crystallized the notion that businesses should respect and support children's rights. Indeed, the corporate responsibility to respect children's rights and opportunity to support children's rights apply to all businesses in everything that they do - in the workplace, the marketplace, the environment and the community alike. This is certainly no small task, and in order to wholly appreciate what respecting and supporting children's rights entails, it is helpful to place the Children's Rights and Business Principles in the wider context of business and human rights.

Importantly, the Children's Rights and Business Principles are based on internationally recognized standards. They do not create new human rights for children, but rather provide an operational framework for businesses to respect children's existing rights as established under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC has defined the way that governments think about children's rights for over two decades, and more recent expert guidance has clarified that these rights must be considered in laws, policies and plans about how business is done. The Principles also draw from the International Labour Organization's Conventions No. 138 on Minimum Age and No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

The Principles do not create new obligations for businesses, and instead build on the idea that companies have a responsibility to respect human rights as provided in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The Children's Rights and Business Principles are also aligned with the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact, which – among other things – call on businesses to respect and support internationally proclaimed human rights. The Principles elaborate on what this voluntary commitment to human rights and labour standards means with regard to children's rights.

With all of this in mind, the Principles can be best understood among the larger constellation of international human rights and business standards. Together, these standards show how businesses, as well as governments, can work to ensure that all rights of all children are fully realized.

For further information, please visit www.childrenandbusiness.org

*For more information, please read the "Note on the Relationship between the Guiding Principles and Global Compact's Human Rights Principles", available at http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/human_rights/Resources/GPs_GC%20note.pdf



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GOVERNMENT

ILO CONVENTIONS NO. 138 AND 182

Following comprehensive research into child labour, the ILO concluded that it was necessary to strengthen existing international standards on the issue. ILO Convention No. 182 emphasizes the urgency of action to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, while Convention No. 138 sets minimum acceptable ages for children to be admitted into employment and work. Both of these Conventions are considered fundamental to the ILO's work on child labour.

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted in 1989, and has been ratified by nearly every country in the world. From education and health to protection from violence and freedom of expression, the CRC touches on all facets of children's lives. While the Convention does not specifically address the role of business in realizing children's rights, its four guiding principles – non-discrimination, survival and development, the best interests of the child, and participation – are of special importance to all matters that impact children.

CRC GENERAL COMMENT NO. 16

In 2013, the Committee on the Rights of the Child published General Comment No. 16 on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights. The General Comment gives governments authoritative guidance on how to regulate, influence and engage with the private sector to make sure that companies respect children's rights. It also makes the link between the CRC and the private sector more explicit, recognizing that "duties and responsibilities to respect the rights of children...apply to private actors and business enterprises."

UN GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, unanimously endorsed by the Human Rights Council in 2011, provide an authoritative global standard for preventing and addressing the risk of adverse impacts on human rights linked to business activity. They apply to all States and to all business enterprises, both transnational and others, regardless of their size, sector, location, ownership and structure. The Guiding Principles are organized around three pillars: (1) State duty to protect human rights; (2) Corporate responsibility to respect human rights; and (3) Access to remedy.

UN GLOBAL COMPACT PRINCIPLES

The UN Global Compact asks companies to embrace and report on their progress in implementing a set of Ten Principles in the areas of human rights, labour standards, the environment and anti-corruption. The first two principles of the UN Global Compact, which are derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, call on companies to respect and support internationally proclaimed human rights and not to be complicit in human rights abuses.

BUSINESS

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND BUSINESS PRINCIPLES

The Children's Rights and Business Principles were developed in consultation with business, child rights experts, civil society, governments and children. They aim not only to show businesses how they impact on children's rights, but also to empower children to share how businesses affect them. Save the Children, UNICEF and the United Nations Global Compact hope they will serve as an inspiration and guidepost for all businesses, everywhere, in their interactions with children.



United Nations Global Compact



Save the Children