



Children's participation in Corporate Social Responsibility



Save the Children

Making CSR Work for Children



Children from Bangladesh. Photo: Jan Sandberg.

Children explore corporate social responsibility (CSR) in South Asia and Latin America and its impact on families and communities.

“Please join with us for our development”

14 year old girl from Bangladesh

The information contained within this report was compiled through consultations with more than 150 girls and boys in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Peru, Paraguay and Venezuela ages 10–18. As much as possible, the information and recommendations have been presented in their original format and wording, with some allowances made for translation. Some sections were summarized by staff members from Save the Children Sweden following a group discussion.

The participants included children in low income families, children living in slums, minority children and children from both rural and urban areas. The majority of participants are working children with some experience in advocacy, community projects and initiatives.

Making the Case

Children and young people were asked why the private sector should invest in children and care about their rights...

Boys and girls felt that companies have responsibilities in their working and business areas to promote their image as socially responsible actors in society. Companies are doing business and gaining profits by selling their product in the community. They should therefore support community development activities such as health centers, emergency response, school and recreational facilities, environmental initiatives and training facilities for the betterment of the people, especially for the children in their own community.

“Helping children will give a company publicity which is an asset. It will help them gain recognition and support from the community.”

Young person from Peru

“They should build play grounds for all of us for our entertainment.”

Young person from Pakistan

“Work for pollution control.”

14 year old boy from India

“They should come forward to help the poor family during flood and other disaster.”

Young person from Bangladesh



Children from Peru: Photo: Jan Sandberg.

The children also recognized the connection between society and business. Where a business needs a healthy society and work force for its growth; a healthy society in-turn needs successful companies to create jobs, increase wealth and to improve the standards of living and social conditions. For this reason businesses should care about children and children's rights by creating social awareness on different issues such as adolescent health, education, cleanliness, balanced nutrition and so on.

“Social security of families will ensure security of children”

14 year old girl from India

“What we want is a mutual benefit; as far as business wants to make money, we want development, we want you to be aware of our humanity, do not pollute our environment, do not exploit us, listen to us, accept our opinion, we want an equal treatment.”

Young person from Peru

“[Businesses] should organize sports and recreational competition for poor children”

Young person from Bangladesh

“They should provide free medicines to children as all parents can't afford them.”

Young Person from Pakistan

Recognizing that the corporate sector is one of the important stakeholders for ensuring children's rights in the community, it can work as a support group to address rights. The private sector can play an important role to influence children's lives by providing employment to children, their parents and family members. Children explained that if their parents do not receive adequate pay then it affects the well being of children, forcing them to work, miss school and contribute to the household income.

“Pay our parents adequately so that children do not have to drop out of school.”

13 year old boy from India

Making it Yours

Boys and girls explored how a focus on children's rights can benefit the private sector...

If a company takes positive action to improve children's rights, it will definitely benefit because children and other workers will pay more attention to their work. They will work more efficiently and will pay attention to the business, knowing that the company cares about them. Ownership will be built among workers and the company's reputation will be improved.

Businesses need a healthy society and work force for its growth and sustainable business. They will benefit in the future if they promote children's rights because today's children can be their future skilled workers. Children believe that good practices should be followed by all businesses which would in turn build their positive image and goodwill in the society and they could use that goodwill as an integral part of their marketing strategy.

If the children are more educated and skilled they will get jobs in different companies and can contribute to the development of the companies through their increased skill. If the corporate sector extends their cooperation for education and training opportunities, they will ultimately get ready-made skilled workers.

"A strong CSR program is one that involves and empowers local communities to attain and sustain a better standard of living. We believe that for long term sustenance, an organization's CSR must focus on growing communities that will also grow the business. We believe in 'Doing Well by Doing Good'."

Corporate Representative working in Pakistan

Making it Ours

Children and young people discussed the possible benefits for themselves, their families and their communities...

If companies care more and support children's rights, children's lives will change for the better. Companies can provide job related training for skills improvement, time to study and hire older family members so that children do not need to work at an early age.

“Companies should help our young siblings for their education, rest and recreation”

Young person from Bangladesh



Bangladesh. Photo: Nicolas Pitt.

Children explained that their role was to speak out more about how companies are affecting their lives both positively and negatively and to act as monitors of their activities. They discussed various strategies for fulfilling this role including working with the media.

“We must speak out, if we do something big companies might pay attention and we could raise their awareness, but the problem is that if we go alone they will not listen to us.”

Young person from Paraguay

“The right way is for companies to take the initiative to approach us.”

Young person from Paraguay

Children expressed that their future prospects could greatly improve with the right support from companies. One child gave an example of a corporate foundation in her community that provided her cousin with a scholarship and training. Her cousin is now employed and earning a good wage.

The boys and girls also shared their experience with one corporation that provides children with a work environment that accommodates school exams and class schedules. They provide a fair wage and training opportunities that will assist in securing future full time employment.

Children believe that companies could develop training centres in their own business areas which are targeted to children in the community. They could handle the job place-ment in a professional way that will help the children to gain a positive impression about the private sector. They could develop the community infrastructure for the betterment of the children.

“They should build schools in the areas where there are no schools. All the children have right to education and they should help those children.”

Young person from Pakistan

“They should build schools where poor children get free education.”

Young person from Pakistan

“They should build roads for us to reach school in time and safely.”

Young person from Pakistan

“Promote responsible parenthood and develop capacity among young people about their sexual and reproductive rights.”

Young person from Venezuela

“I want them to give poor children facilities of fees and books so that they can study further.”

14 year old girl from India

The young people explained that their lives could be improved if businesses could ensure proper working conditions for their employees, protect human rights, provide a safe working environment, fair wages, good working hours and eliminate gender discrimination.

“My expectation from the company is that they should create opportunity for work and that should be safe and non hazardous.”

13 year old girl from Bangladesh

“We do not want to see wage and gender discrimination by the companies. They should provide same wage to all employee and respect all in a same manner.”

13 year old boy from Bangladesh

“I want them to arrange medical check-up per month.”

17 year old girl from India

“Waste management should be there.”

15 year old girl from India

“Do not hire children and adolescents and force them to work as adults, respect their rights”

Young person from Peru

“I want them to organize separate transport facility for girls.”

16 year old girl from India

They recognized the potential benefits of increased access to the job market that can be provided by companies. Children will be able to find good employment with handsome salaries and other benefits. If the companies are aware of children's rights, the workplaces will be safe and protective for the children and a child sensitive and child friendly atmosphere will be created within the companies.

The participants explored other benefits, which included:

- Poverty can be eradicated
- Family economic conditions can be improved
- Younger siblings can develop and receive a good education
- Improved lifestyle and quality of life

Corporate initiatives can bring significant change in the lives of working children. Links between the corporate sector and other service providing organizations can create employment opportunities and lasting change for disadvantaged children. NGO and corporate joint initiatives are very effective for supporting vulnerable groups.

“Employers should change their behaviour towards child labourers if they have any in their company. We will respect those companies who followed proper policies for the young workers... provide proper working guidelines and maintain proper respect to them.”

12 year old girl from Bangladesh

“Do not take advantage of us, we ask you to be responsible, do not support us because you feel pity for us, instead support us because we deserve it, we purchase your products and services, but we ask you to invest in our development. We do not want gifts, we want you to be responsible”

Message to business from young person in Peru

Published by: Save the Children (2010)

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We would like to thank the children and young people for their valuable contributions as well as the staff who supported the discussions. Many thanks to: Block office of SAATH, Dolka, India; Nari Prabodan Manch, Latur District, India; Save the Children Sweden Denmark in Dhaka, Bangladesh; Save the Children Sweden in Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan.

This publication was financed by: Save the Children Sweden

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