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Consulta a los niños, niñas
y adolescentes:
Los principios sobre los
Derechos de los Niños y
las Empresas

Buenos Aires Argentina
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Organizan

Save the Children colectivo
derechos infancia
y adolescencia
www.colectivoinfancia.org.ar CHE PIBE

Consultation on the rights of children and businesses with children and adolescents from Argentina

Introduction

UNICEF, Save the Children and the Global Compact will launch the Principles on the Rights of Children and Businesses this November, with the aim of providing some guidelines for businesses to reduce the negative consequences to the minimum and to enhance the positive impacts of their productions on the lives of children, adolescents and their families.

A consultation with children and adolescents was held in Argentina regarding these principles. The call for this consultation was made by the Colectivo de Derechos de Infancia y Adolescencia, a network of non-governmental organisations performing advocacy activities in the social and political practices in Argentina so children and adolescents may exercise their citizenship in a meaningful way and may enjoy their rights fully, as stated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The “Facilitator’s consultation and guide package” was analysed and adapted to our reality and to the previous experiences of Argentinian children and adolescents. The design of the workshops was also elaborated, including a teaching proposal. Prior to the consultation, a mapping and a brief collection of data were carried out regarding initiatives and documented cases. Participants were previously asked to examine the roles and responsibilities of the private sector to protect and defend children’s rights.

This proposal included two informative workshops with educators from the Colectivo, of 3 hours each. Another six introductory workshops were carried out later, regarding adolescent themes, of 3 hours each. In each of these workshops delegates were elected democratically, among those who attended the consultation of July 16th.



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The consultation

The consultation was held on July 16th at the Casa del Niño of the Che Pibe Foundation, an organisation which is part of the Colectivo de Derechos de Infancia y Adolescencia.

In the opening of the work day the following people participated: Nora Pulido, from the Colectivo de Derechos de Infancia y Adolescencia, and Henry Chiroque, from Save the Children Argentina. Gina Solari, from Save de Children, also came from Peru; she narrated other experiences from consultations with children and adolescents, which are being held in other countries.

Workshops developed during the consultation

This report will try to show what was discussed, thought about, and questioned during the whole workday with children and adolescents regarding the influence/impact of businesses in their lives and in their communities.

The meeting was divided into two parts: the first one more related to the problem of the reality children and adolescents live in; the second one, with a more proactive nature, where participants of this workday were able to propose and suggest alternatives for businesses to generate wellbeing for them based on the seven principles of children's rights and businesses initiative.

The work we performed during the whole workday was accompanied by three problems regarding effect of businesses activities. The first one, related to the impact that nearby companies generate, polluting the soil, air and water of the area. The second problem is linked to product sales of the companies, with all the chemicals used for producing them. And last, the labour situation of the company and factory workers,



mostly parents and with over 12 working hours, and in overcrowding and unhealthy conditions.

The meeting was constantly accompanied by games that helped putting together the dynamics as they occurred. Many of these games had goals of integration and interaction, because children with whom we work come from different places/institutions as we have explained above.

Development of the Workday

For the realisation of this meeting, two documentaries were used. One of them was more introductory and had the purpose of “shooting” what was later going to be debated during the workday —it was called *“The History of Stuff”*. This documentary intends to show, in general terms, the logic behind the model of production in the capitalist system. In addition to discuss the video while showing it, we understood it in a collective manner. And, towards the end of the meeting, we watched a documentary of the working cooperative: *“The Dawn of the Cartoneros [Ragmen]”* with the Movement of Marginalised Workers, who produced a documentary reporting on three companies which pollute the surrounding areas. We were also able to discuss a little about the work of these workers organised in a cooperative, with a horizontal conception of daily work.

The first documentary encouraged us to propose a fieldtrip around the neighbourhood in order to see the pollution caused by three companies. These companies dispose of all their waste into the community (water, chemicals, air and solid waste). This fieldtrip had the purpose of measuring the harsh reality which thousands of families living there suffer, among terrible living conditions in the slopes closet to these companies, also breathing polluted air, drinking water resulting in big amounts of lead in the blood, etc.



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After lunch and some cooperative games we had among ourselves, we started the second part of the meeting, where we worked on the seven principles for businesses divided in groups.

Children and adolescents discussed and posed questions on different alternatives and proposals submitted in the drafts regarding businesses' work.

Proposals / Conclusions of the Day

Some of the subjects posed in the discussions from the children's discourse were the following:

- One of the groups questioned the idea of business "emergency", always linked to different events (tsunamis, floods, etc.), where only then they would be "called" for action. Children explained their own concepts of emergencies: *"To us, an emergency is not to have water, to live in polluted environments, to have a sick child, to have a kid exposed to drugs, prostitution, crime, exploitation, and child labour. All of this is an emergency and the worst thing of all is to experience it on a daily basis"*.
- Regarding the promotion/publication of children's rights on all media: *"That all children be respected and all their rights be fulfilled by the businesses" (...) "that they try to publish more on the rights of the child, and that the money comes from the companies"*.
- "Recycling rubbish"
(...) *"that the rubbish truck comes every day so the rubbish doesn't pile up in the streets"*.
(...) *"that the factories polluting the environment close"*.
(...) *"that the companies do not burn more rubbish on open air because it brings*



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breathing and skin diseases”.

(...) “that the companies help creating more places with trees in the cities”.

- Regarding the working conditions of the workers (children's and adolescent's parents):

“that our parents receive community outreach, decent wages which cover our needs”.

(...) “that they contribute with medical check ups in the areas where they pollute”.

(...) “that they clean all pollution generated and in parallel, they stop contaminating”.

(...) “to use renewable resources for the elaboration of the products”.

(...) “that they promote a responsible consumption”.

(...) “that their products do not generate addictions”.

- Regarding the respect of the working conditions for adolescents and young people already working at a given place:

“decent wages, legal work, community outreach”.

(...) “we want parents to have a day off on every one of their children's birthdays”.

(...) “that the 8-hour work day be respected”.

(...) “that we do not submit to physical, psychological authoritarianism, so we do not take this home, and the same for the parents”.

(...) “we have a right to play, to have fun, to study and NOT to work”.

- What to do:

“put up posters on how products are made”

(...) “recover principles and customs from the countrymen and original communities (such as the care for the Mother Earth-Pachamama, the respect for life and the work of the workers)”.



(...) “protect our natural resources”.

(...) “that reusable containers be used”.

(...) “pass laws allowing to fulfill the proposals made by the social organisations,
and that a committee be appointed”.

- What not to do:

“pollute,

exploit,

make non-recyclable containers,

make products with agrochemicals,

have workers paid under the table,

pay workers a pittance”.

Consultation Schedule

Saturday, July 16th - 2011

09:30 a.m.

REGISTRATION and BREAKFAST

10:30 a.m.

OPENING OF THE MEETING

- Nora PULIDO – Colectivo de Derechos de Infancia y Adolescencia
 - UNICEF Argentina
- Gina SOLARI and Henry CHIROQUE - Save the Children

11:00 a.m.

INTRODUCTION

Video show

- Reflections using a play approach

11:45 a.m.

EDUCATIVE FIELD TRIP

1:00 p.m.

LUNCH AT CASA DEL NIÑO

2:00 p.m.

**WORKSHOP ON THE SEVEN FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES DEVELOP
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUSINESSES BASED ON THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN
AND ADOLESCENTS**

4:15 p.m.

CLOSING ACTIVITY AS A PLENARY. FORMULATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS



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Final wrap up of the day

The young people and educators synthesised the experience at the end of the day.

Let's overview a few reflections gathered in the work day.

Reflections of the youths

"I think it was something unique, a good, educative experience, and I hope that everyone, the same as me, have learned something from all we have seen, because this is what people experience here and in other parts –the issue of pollution and working conditions. I hope that even more people learn what I have learned; it is somewhat sad and unpleasant to live like this, but I hope that anyone watching this do something about it; I hope that children do not have to live like this anymore, that a big change may happen here and everywhere."

"I thought it was a beautiful experience. I liked working in groups a lot, and we have to keep doing this until we achieve something; we get together here to talk but it is necessary to achieve the goal we have set for the realization of children's rights, and I would like to get together again here or elsewhere, I learned a lot and I think this works for all of us to learn".

"I think it was very good to come here and share with all of you; we enjoyed ourselves and also saw how people are being polluted, and it was good to meet them and do all this because it was fun, and I'd like to do it again because we have to fulfill children's and adolescents' rights, and because of adults, many of whom are being exploited".



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"I liked this experience very much, I had never had anything like this before, and I leave touched and moved at the same time. Touched for having shared this day with you, and moved because of what we saw today".

"I think the day was quite nice, we were able to see things we didn't know and to see the problems and illnesses that people living near the factories have to endure, and that was very good".

"We wanted to thank you for treating us so good, for this day we have spent together; it was good knowing other parts of life, because we do not go out of our neighbourhood much and we are not aware of the things that are happening here or in other places. You are very, very nice people (laughs); thank you".

"It would be a good thing to keep disseminating more in further days to more people in order to avoid all the things we have seen".

Reflections from educators and workshop coordinators

"I'd first like to thank everyone, greet everyone, youths and role models for meeting all three poles: the neighbourhoods of xx, and xx was very good, because we all have our rights and the right to have a happy home, and if that doesn't happen, we have to struggle from all democratic States".



"I believe I support everything that was said from the technical school #5, and I'd like to highlight that what seems most important to me is if all this reaches businesses, what matters most is to listen to the children, what children and adolescents really ask for is to see what their parents are living. Thanks for all the affection".

"I liked the day very much, I had a good time, I was surprised: there were a couple of actors here (laughs) which I didn't know. I was deeply touched; I didn't know this side of the neighbourhood, and well, we have to keep working, and what all the kids want is that rules respect all that, and that it doesn't have to end in a piece of paper".

"Well, I'd like to tell you that here at *Che Pibe* it was difficult for us to bring this subject to discussion, kids talk a lot more about shooting, hunger and the low age of legal responsibility for minors: these are the things kids live constantly. But we saw the need to discuss this subject, and it seemed important for us because we live with pollution, so we decided to do it here, in xx. It was a great thing to welcome people from other places; it was important for us internally in order to keep building participation, and with materials which will later be edited, and which businesses will listen to; and we see the riches that remain with you (addressing the young people), because you are the ones who will stay here and we have to defend this not only with one day's work, but also mobilising, because we know that this day is just a part to achieve this but it is not enough. So we place our hopes on you, so you will gain strength, because it is not enough with just one video. So, why don't we prepare ourselves as political subjects with the ability to govern ourselves?"



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