

Children's Consultation for the Children's Rights and Business Principles Initiative Philippines

Background

Save the Children strives to create a society that values every child. We work to strengthen the capacities of the government, civil society and the private sector to uphold children's rights. Save the Children supports the Children's Rights and Business Principles Initiative (CRBPI) by working with partner community-based child-led organizations to develop a set of principles that will guide the private sector in promoting and respecting children's rights. These organizations are the *Ang Karapatan ng Kabataan Ating Protektahan* (AKKAP: Let's Protect Children's Rights) and the Youth Meets the Children Organization (YMETCO).

We strategically selected these organizations to contribute to the CRBPI because these groups are situated in urban poor communities in Metro Manila, and its children members are highly and constantly exposed to consumerism. Apart from these, these groups are part of the Children Talk to Children Project (C2C Project), a partnership project of four child-led organizations focusing on children's rights monitoring. Thus, awareness on the role of the private sector will help them analyze relevant community issues, and to also monitor to what extent children's rights are or are not fulfilled in relevant settings and situations, including in relation to the private sector.

Save the Children conducted a whole day consultation last 26 June 2011 to provide a venue for children to understand the role and responsibilities of the private sector in the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; support children's participation in the development of the CRBPI; and increase opportunities for children to influence the business sector.

The consultation involved 24 members (12 girls and 12 boys) of AKKAP and YMETCO, with age ranging from 12 to 17 years old. Most of them are in school but others stopped studying and have had experienced working. They represent children from communities of informal settlers, wherein a community has approximately 600 families and each family has an average of 3-5 children. The representatives were selected by other children based on the criteria each group has developed. To facilitate the development of the criteria, Save the Children provided two minimum criteria: the age of the participating children should be between 12 and 17, and the children should already be aware of the UN CRC. The other members identified additional criteria such as willingness to and interest in participating, ability to speak for the organization, ability to express opinion and friendliness. The representatives were selected through a voting process.

Pre-consultation Process

Save the Children capitalized on the work of the C2C Project to undertake the CRBPI consultation. The staff supporting the project was assigned to oversee the entire consultation process. With the help of a consultant, the CRBPI material was translated into child-friendly form in the Filipino language. While the internal preparation is ongoing, the focal persons of the two organizations were informed and consulted about the children's consultation for the CRBPI.

As soon as the two organizations have firmed up their commitments, they were provided materials, which include a CRBPI primer, consent forms and administrative notes containing important information about the activity. The AKKAP members met prior to the consultation to briefly discuss the CRBPI materials and select representatives based on the agreed criteria. YMETCO, on the other hand, opted for a house-to-house visit because the group's meeting was canceled due to heavy rains and flooding. The preparatory activities of the child-led organizations were supported by the pioneer members (these are young adults who are former children members of the organizations).

Save the Children developed a consultation design patterned from the consultation package provided by the regional office. We opted to conduct a one-day consultation instead of following the suggested consultation process because target participants already have a deep understanding of children's rights. In terms of methodology, the design consists of a combination of plenary discussion, group exercises, and fun and interactive games to ensure the effective and meaningful participation of the children.

Key Discussions and Issues

The consultation began with an introduction and leveling off on expectations and program flow; and then followed by a short review of the four principles of the UN CRC. After leveling off on child rights concepts, the children defined what business is and identified the different kinds of business present in their community. Once the different kinds of business were clustered, the children brainstormed on the impact of business to them, on their family and their community; and relate these effects and impacts to their rights as children. The discussion of CRBPI principles followed after the children were able to clearly articulate the links between business and their rights. The summary of issues raised and recommendations the children identified are presented in the table below.

Issues raised by children	Recommendations of children to business
Principle 1: Make commitment to children and their family	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communities are demolished, or spaces where children can play are turned into business establishments. 2. Air and noise pollution in areas near bus terminals. Children are also in danger of being hit by vehicles. 3. Many children became addicted to computer games and neglect school assignments. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preserve communities by all means. Stop grabbing residential lands for business. 2. Consult children about the impact/ foreseen impact of business on their lives.
Principle 2: Respect children's rights in the workplace	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Businesses hire children because they are sources of cheap labor. Working children endure difficult tasks and some experience abuse from their employer. 2. Parents work long hours for low pay. They even encounter maltreatment from their employers. These cause parents a lot of stress and lack of time to help children complete school assignments. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Always follow the appropriate working age as defined by law. Demand strong and authentic evidence to prove age to prevent child labor. Regardless of the minimum age set by law for children to be employed (set as 16 years old under Republic Act 9231, which provides for the protection against and elimination of worst forms of child labor), businesses should be discouraged from employing children. If a child really needs to work, require light work load and give equal or even better benefits than adults. 2. Develop and implement a child safeguarding protocol in the workplace and advertising to protect children from harm. 3. Include the UN CRC in the orientation of employees. 4. Provide space for employees to rest comfortably and space for mothers to breastfeed their child if they need to.
Principle 3: Make sure your products and services are safe and make a positive contribution to children's lives.	
<p>Products like beer and cigarettes are sold to children. Some children become addicted to alcohol and/or get sick.</p>	<p>Monitor not only the sales but also the population consuming the product and make effort to prevent stores from selling harmful products to children.</p>
Principle 4: Use marketing and advertising to advance children's rights	
<p>Children are not consulted about the possible effect of the product/ advertisement on them. Instead business is reactive and responds only when harm is already caused to children.</p>	<p>Consult children about the possible effect of the product/ advertisement before launching them.</p>
Principles 5: Take care of the environment where children live and grow	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Businesses use plastics, which when thrown away clog the drainage and cause flooding. 2. Harmful chemicals in the atmosphere cause sickness among children 3. Illegal logging for products made of wood. This causes landslides and flooding in the community. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use biodegradable and recyclable materials and ensure the proper disposal of waste to prevent emergencies particularly flooding. 2. Dispose of harmful chemicals properly. 3. Stop cutting trees and, if not possible, plant new trees early before cutting the old ones.
Principle 6: Help protect children affected by emergencies	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of capacity to save one's self in case of emergency. This includes lack of 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prevent actions causing disasters such as irresponsible disposal of waste, which causes flooding.

Issues raised by children	Recommendations of children to business
<p>knowledge about disaster preparedness and difficult emergency signs and directions.</p> <p>2. Break out of life-threatening diseases in the midst of emergency such as leptospirosis, dengue and diarrhea.</p>	<p>2. Strictly follow disaster preparedness measures in business establishment. Moreover, make emergency signs and instructions child friendly through the use of images or interactive videos instead of plain text.</p> <p>3. Help children affected by disasters by providing cheap or even free medicines.</p>
Principle 7: Support community and government efforts to fulfill children's rights	
<p>1. The government overlooks children working in bus terminals.</p> <p>2. There are many unregistered businesses that exploit children</p> <p>3. Increase in prostitution and cases of early pregnancy because of cheap motels.</p>	<p>1. Business should collaborate with the government in developing policies that will guide private and public partnerships.</p> <p>2. Support government in creating laws that protect children from harmful commercialism such as sexual exploitation.</p> <p>3. Monitor other businesses. Report illegal/ unregistered businesses to the government.</p> <p>4. Maintain regular communication with the government.</p>

The children also recommend adding another principle to emphasize the role of business in promoting the principle of non-discrimination and inclusion in their operations, products and services. For example, the private sector should ensure that the curriculum for private schools is not too advanced, which leaves out children in public school; and increase work opportunities for people with disabilities because they also have family and children to feed.

Proposed Monitoring Mechanism

During the post-consultation meeting, children developed a simple monitoring mechanism to ensure that the business sector remains committed to promote and respect children's rights. The process is composed of the following steps.

1. Formation of a core group that will focus on monitoring the impact of business on children. This group can be composed of children and adults.
2. Maintaining regular dialogues between the business sector and the core group. The dialogue will focus on the issues experienced by the business sector and the people in the community, best practices employed by business and recommendations in response to issues.
3. Gathering of opinion from the people (adult and children) about the impact of business on their lives and on their community.
4. Writing a report about the issues experienced by children and adults in/because of business and recommendations to solve these issues.
5. Presentation of the report to business and government through a dialogue. This means returning to point number 2 and then repeat the cycle of monitoring.

*To make the process complete, children suggest forming a body that will receive and examine monitoring reports.

Children shared that they can be part of the core group monitoring the business sector or they can participate in the data gathering about the impact of business on their lives.

Follow-up Priority Action and Support Needed from Save the Children

AKKAP members plan to consult their colleagues in the organization about the result of the CRBPI consultation. They also would like to engage with existing businesses in the community to persuade them to support the CRBPI. YMETCO members, on the other hand, want to have a much deeper discussion on the CRBPI. They also planned to meet with the business sector to inform and influence them to support the CRBPI.

To make this plan happen, AKKAP requests Save the Children to provide funding and facilitate their engagement with the business sector; while YMETCO is looking forward to technical support and help in finding an avenue to talk to business.

Post-consultation Process

Several meetings were conducted after the consultation to discuss the remaining topics about the benefits; discuss the relevance and monitoring of the CRBPI; to finalize the recommendation of children; to select photos and video clips for the global film; and to assess the entire consultation process. During the follow-up meetings, children expressed that they are more than happy to be part of the consultation. They also provided constructive feedback, as follows:

1. The CRBPI primer would be more interesting if there were images or pictures in the document.
2. Enough time for preparation is important because CRBPI is something new and there were many technical terms that need to be studied.
3. Technical support of adults is important in children's participation in the entire process because there were difficult terms and concepts that need to be explained further.

Furthermore, the groups identified the forms of support that they think Save the Children can provide them from the list provided in the consultation package. Capacity building, dialogue with stakeholders and information sharing are the processes they think would be useful for them while a self-assessment tool would be helpful in determining how they can integrate the CRBPI in their existing work in the organization.