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ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

A tool for companies

First edition

unite for children

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This first edition is a provisional release prepared with inputs from a wide range of contributors and based on experiences from companies that are already engaging child rights stakeholders. Over a two-year pilot period, UNICEF will continue to work with companies to pilot the guidance and welcomes inputs to further refine the tool. A second and final edition of this tool will be released based on relevant feedback and will include additional case studies of implementation. Kindly send any feedback or case studies, and/or expressions of interest to pilot this guidance in collaboration with UNICEF, to the CSR Unit, Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division: csr@unicef.org.

Acknowledgements

This publication was developed through a consultative process and within the framework of UNICEF's Integrated Corporate Engagement approach. The publication benefited from inputs from a wide range of contributors, including:

Tulika Bansal, Danish Institute for Human Rights; Sibylle Baumgartner, Kuoni; Simon Chorley, UNICEF Canada; Charline Daelman, Measuring Business and Human Rights Initiative; Jillian D'Urso, MMG; Dave Knight, DNV Two Tomorrows; Madeleine Koalick, twentyfifty; Gerison Lansdown, international consultant and advocate for children's rights; Monica Lindvall, Save the Children; Cecile Oger, BSR; Vanessa Piercey, Banarra; James Porteous, MMG; Emily Richards, twentyfifty; Kendyl Salcito, Nomogaia; Bram Stoffele, Child Youth and Finance International; Luke Wilde, twentyfifty; Geralda Wildschutt, Anglo American; Mabel Wong, CSR Asia; and Anna Zanghi, MasterCard.

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Any reference made to a company's stakeholder engagement processes does not imply endorsement by UNICEF of their policies and practices. Rather, these are intended to demonstrate learning examples of how companies are engaging stakeholders on child rights issues.

For more information, please visit www.unicef.org/csr.

September 2014

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BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

About the tool

This tool offers guidance to companies on engaging stakeholders on children's rights as part of enhancing their standards and practices at both the corporate and site levels. Engaging stakeholders on children's rights can inform the development of company policies, and human rights due diligence processes (assessing actual and potential human rights impacts, integrating and acting upon the findings, tracking responses and communicating how impacts are addressed), and the development of grievance and remediation mechanisms. Stakeholder engagement can also feed into a company's broader sustainability strategy and long-term goals (*see Figure 1*).

Figure 1: Stakeholder engagement can inform a number of company processes

This tool also serves as a companion piece to UNICEF's suite of tools aimed at supporting companies in implementation of the Children's Rights and Business Principles. Its objective is to guide companies on why, with whom and how business should engage stakeholders – both children and child rights advocates – on issues affecting children in order to gain a better understanding of a company's actual or potential impacts on children's rights. A company may use this tool in different ways, depending on the level of its impact on children's rights, the size of the business, and the nature and context of the operation. It provides:

- Guidance to help companies determine the relevance and appropriate level of engagement with stakeholders on children's rights (Part I)
- Guidance and tools on identifying and prioritizing child rights stakeholders, including children (Part II)
- Guidance for companies that plan to consult children directly, and how to do so ethically, with appropriate safeguards for children in place (Part III).

A number of existing tools already provide guidance on the identification of issues for stakeholder engagement and how to conduct a consultation process, including:

- **Shift**
  Bringing a Human Rights Lens to Stakeholder Engagement
  Open PDF at http://shiftproject.org/sites/default/files/ Bringing a Human Rights Lens to Stakeholder Engagement.pdf
- **BSR**
  Back to Basics: How to make stakeholder engagement meaningful for your company
  Open PDF at www.bsr.org/reports/BSR_Five-Step_Guide_to_Stakeholder_Engagement.pdf
- **AccountAbility**
  AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard (AA1000SES)
  Available at www.accountability.org/standards/aa1000ses/index.html

  The Stakeholder Engagement Manual
  Available at www.accountability.org/about-us/publications/the-stakeholder.html
- **United Nations Global Compact**
  Stakeholder engagement resource guide
  Available at www.unglobalcompact.org/issues/human_rights/tools_and_guidance_materials.html#stakeholder
- **International Finance Corporation**
  Stakeholder Engagement: A good practice handbook for companies doing business in emerging markets
  Open PDF at www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/938f1a0048855805beacfe6a6515bb18/IFC_StakeholderEngagement.pdf?MOD=AJPERES

What are children's rights?

Human rights apply to all age groups, and children have the same fundamental human rights as adults. However, there are rights that only apply to children due to their unique needs and particular vulnerabilities.[1] Human rights impact assessments should include all internationally recognized human rights instruments as a framework for evaluating the full suite of risks and opportunities for all rights holders. In regard to children, companies will need to consider the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)[2] as part of the international framework. The CRC elaborates the human rights of children, recognizing the interdependence of their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. It also recognizes that children may need particular accommodation or protection in order to fully enjoy these rights.

While the CRC enshrines the right of the child to be protected by States, the Children's Rights and Business Principles provide the operational framework for businesses to *respect* (avoid infringing on the rights of children and address any adverse impacts) and *support* (voluntary actions that seek to advance children's rights) this right. Each Principle lays out actions that businesses can take in terms of their corporate responsibility to respect children's rights, as well as suggested actions to support children's rights in the workplace, marketplace and community. In this way, the Principles aim to help businesses better understand their responsibilities towards children in a variety of contexts, including the employment of young workers, marketing practices, interaction with local communities and operation in emergency situations.

The Principles provide a child rights lens to the global standards on business and human rights established by the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights for Implementing the United Nations 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework.[3] As outlined in Children's Rights and Business Principle 1, a business should identify how it impacts child rights by conducting human rights due diligence with reference to legal instruments – including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, and International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour and No. 138 on the minimum age for admission to employment and work.[4]

1 UNICEF, 'Protecting Children's Rights', www.unicef.org/crc/index_protecting.html
2 *See* www.unicef.org/crc *for the Convention text in Arabic, English, French and Spanish.*
3 United Nations Special Representative John Ruggie proposed the framework on business and human rights to the Human Rights Council in June 2008, built on three pillars: (1) the state duty to protect against human rights abuses by third parties, including business; (2) the corporate responsibility to respect human rights; and (3) greater access by victims to effective remedy, both judicial and non-judicial. *For more information and to access the full 'Guiding Principles' document, see:* www.unglobalcompact.org/issues/human_rights/the_un_srsg_and_the_un_global_compact.html
4 *For more information and the full text of these ILO Conventions, see:* www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/ILOconventionsonchildlabour/lang--en/index/htm

Stakeholder engagement under the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

As defined in the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,[5] stakeholder engagement is an ongoing process of interaction between a company and its stakeholders that enables the company to understand which issues matter most to stakeholders, and to respond to the perspectives and concerns of potentially affected individuals. In order to assess human rights impacts, Guiding Principle 18 calls on companies to "involve meaningful consultation with potentially affected groups and other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate to the size of the business enterprise and the nature and context of the operation."

The Guiding Principles also emphasize the importance of considering vulnerable individuals, groups and communities that may be at heightened risk of vulnerability or marginalization, which can include children, women, indigenous groups or people with disabilities. In order to properly assess human rights risks and opportunities, it is important not only to engage with stakeholders who can influence the business, but also those who may be affected by its activities – thus moving from a focus on 'risk to business' to 'risk to people'.

Companies' consideration of their impact on child rights is often relegated to the issue of child labour or community investment, yet the impacts of business on children extend to such aspects as product design and advertising, the behaviour of staff towards children, and children's rights in the supply chain. Many companies cause or contribute to potential or actual impacts on children's rights and should therefore consider children as a priority stakeholder group.

Children are often the most vulnerable population, requiring specific attention to guarantee respect for their human rights. It is possible that one business activity might not impact the rights of adults, but the same activity could adversely impact the rights of a child. For example, certain levels of air emissions or water effluents may not have significant adverse effects on an adult, whereas a lower threshold of emissions or water pollution may negatively affect a child's health due to their physical size, developing bodies and metabolic rates.

Despite this, children have not been adequately considered by business. Moreover, children are usually less well placed to advocate for their own interests and may be silenced within their households or communities. Unless dedicated efforts are made to reach out to them – or to child rights advocates, the organizations or individuals who are in close contact with children or who have the expertise to provide information on children's rights in a particular context – children may be at risk of exclusion from companies' stakeholder engagement processes.

The Children's Rights and Business Principles

Developed through a process led by UNICEF, the United Nations Global Compact and Save the Children – together with companies and other stakeholders – the Children's Rights and Business Principles call on businesses to:

1. Meet their responsibility to respect children's rights and commit to supporting the human rights of children.
2. Contribute towards the elimination of child labour, including in all business activities and business relationships.
3. Provide decent work for young workers, parents and caregivers.
4. Ensure the protection and safety of children in all business activities and facilities.
5. Ensure that products and services are safe, and seek to support children's rights through them.
6. Use marketing and advertising that respect and support children's rights.
7. Respect and support children's rights in relation to the environment and to land acquisition and use.
8. Respect and support children's rights in security arrangements.
9. Help protect children affected by emergencies.
10. Reinforce community and government efforts to protect and fulfil children's rights

5 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework*, United Nations, New York and Geneva, 2011, www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf

PART I: WHY ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Part I explains why it is important for companies to engage stakeholders on children's rights, as relevant to their business and level of child rights impact, and provides guidance for companies in determining the appropriate level of engagement.

1.1 Why engage on children's rights?

Engagement on children's rights can help businesses to better mitigate and manage risk, safeguard reputation, and increase their social licence to operate. Children are both rights holders and stakeholders as companies interact with them on a daily basis as workers, consumers, community members and children of employees. Children also represent the next generation of workers and consumers for every business. Thus, it is important to hear, understand and respond to their views.

Engagement on children's rights can serve a number of purposes. It can assist a company in better understanding specifically how children may be affected by business activities and how significant that impact may be. Engagement with child rights stakeholders can complement broader stakeholder engagement and human rights due diligence processes to obtain a wide range of perspectives from rights holders – including children – on a company's human rights impact.

Key reasons for engaging stakeholders on children's rights

Engaging child rights stakeholders can strengthen a company's human rights processes and broader sustainability practices – not only to better understand specific child rights risks and opportunities, but to obtain a range of perspectives on their broad human rights impact. Consultation with child rights groups and individuals is vital to:

- Hear, understand and respond to children's unique opinions, views, experiences and information that can be useful to business in conducting human rights due diligence.
- Obtain information about child rights impacts that can also serve as an early indicator or 'red flag' to a company of its broader human rights risk.
- Provide insight on how companies can mitigate risks or how to address opportunities to advance children's rights.
- Build trust and long-lasting relationships among wider communities, and avoid unnecessary grievances and reduce potential for community conflict.
- Ensure that children are regarded as equal stakeholders and demonstrate commitment to taking children's views and welfare seriously.

Engagement on children's rights can also be helpful in understanding:

- Issues that are important to children but not captured from engagements with other stakeholder groups because of their sensitivity (e.g., child labour, sexual exploitation).
- Disaggregated household-level impacts (e.g., education of girls versus boys, unequal distribution of food or income within the family, the effects of parents' work on children).
- Heightened risk of discrimination against particular groups of children (e.g., minorities, girls, disadvantaged youth, child labourers, children with disabilities) for which there may be insufficient information.

1.2 Breadth of engagement

Engaging with child rights stakeholders can inform broad sustainability strategies, support the process of implementing human rights, inform materiality exercises,[6] or enable a company to delve deeper into specific material issues to determine appropriate actions and responses (*see Table 1*). Moreover, engagement may take place at the corporate or site levels.

In some cases, companies may choose to carry out stand-alone engagement processes on children's rights. In others, they could integrate children's rights issues or children's perspectives into broader stakeholder engagement processes – whether carried out regularly (e.g., on an annual cycle) or in relation to a specific issue, product launch or country/community of operation. Companies can avoid 'engagement fatigue' on the part of the company and the stakeholders by integrating consultations on children's rights into broader assessments.

Table 1 lists a selection of objectives for engagement, including a mix of approaches at the corporate, site and product levels. Regardless of the approach, stakeholder engagement on children's rights requires early, proactive and ongoing interaction with potentially affected stakeholders or child rights advocates to identify potential impacts before they occur.[7]

Table 1: Objectives of engagement

Engagement approach	Example
Defining sustainability strategy and goals at the corporate level	Company X carries out biannual engagement on its most material corporate social responsibility issues and includes child rights advocates as part of this collective stakeholder discussion to understand their unique perspectives and opinions.
Conducting human rights impact assessment at the corporate or site levels	Company X is conducting a site-level human rights impact assessment and engages NGOs, local community leaders, and security personnel to identify child rights risks and opportunities, and to understand how the company can respect and support human rights in collaboration with business partners and government.
Conducting local community consultations to understand impacts of company operations	Company X is extracting natural resources and, through its community engagement initiative, conducts engagement with child rights advocates NGOs, teachers, health workers and parents in order to understand the breadth and severity of operational impacts on children in the surrounding villages.
Assessing product/service impacts	Company X plans to develop and introduce a new beverage and is conducting focus groups with children of different age groups to understand how to tailor the design to avoid negative impacts.
Integrating children's rights into a risk assessment	Company X has identified the risk of child labour in its distribution chain and engages civil society groups to determine the occurrence of child labour in key high-risk markets, and if child labour is present, the nature, frequency and severity of the risk.
Investigating level of severity/opportunities of a specific child rights issue	Company X has identified the risk of child rights violations when it comes to the employment of young workers in supplier factories. In order to address risks and identify opportunities to support their rights through training and life-skills programmes, Company X commissions a local NGO to engage directly with young workers to understand their employment situation and career aspirations.
Assessing the impacts/benefits of community investments	Company X is analysing how its community nutrition programmes are directly benefiting children by carrying out direct consultations with children facilitated in local schools at the site level.
Developing or reviewing a policy or position paper on a specific child rights issue	Company X is reviewing and revising its human rights and sustainability corporate policies and is engaging a broad range of stakeholders to ensure that it addresses the risks and opportunities faced by different stakeholder groups, including those of vulnerable groups such as women, children and people with disabilities.
Evaluation of programs and action plans on a specific child rights issue	Company X is developing a global platform on child online safety and is engaging with child rights organizations to identify specific risks and opportunities and define the plan of action. It will also engage in direct consultations with children about how they use the Internet, the nature of risks they face, and the strategies that they adopt to protect themselves.

6 The process of identifying and prioritizing sustainability issues to ensure the greatest risks and opportunities are address first and that company resources are focused strategically

7 Shift, 'Bringing a Human Rights Lens to Stakeholder Engagement', Shift Workshop Report No. 3, New York, August 2013, p. 11. Available from: www.shiftproject.org/publication/bringing-human-rights-lens-stakeholder-engagement-shift-workshop-report-no-3

COMPANY EXAMPLE: Child consultations as part of a country level human rights impact assessment

In India, travel management and destination services company Kuoni conducted a country-level human rights impact assessment. As part of the assessment, Kuoni engaged with children, national government representatives, NGOs and international organizations – as well as employees and management at hotels, souvenir shops and transportation companies.

With the aim of directly consulting affected stakeholders, including children, Kuoni collaborated with UNICEF. Together, a methodology to conduct focus groups with children was developed, and two local partner NGOs – I-India and RAJAGIRI outREACH – were identified to facilitate the discussions and to assess the impact of tourism on children's lives.

The partner NGOs selected 47 children living in touristic areas in Jaipur and Cochin and ensured that the children were treated appropriately during the consultations. The consultations revealed that tourists were interested in the local culture, while sometimes lacking cultural sensitivity. Other findings in association with tourism covered: the extent of economic benefits and exclusion experienced by children; drug abuse and sexual exploitation; and the government focus on developing tourism, rather than reducing poverty.

Outcomes of the assessment fed into a human rights action plan to be implemented in 2014–2015 by Kuoni and Sita, its subsidiary in India, in collaboration with relevant local stakeholders.

1.3 Prioritizing issues for engagement

Companies can engage with stakeholders to explore a number of child rights issues across the workplace, marketplace and community. The types of impacts will vary depending on the industry of the company, its size and location. However, child rights impacts that can occur across a number of industries can include the following:

- Occurrence of **child exploitation, violence and abuse** in the workplace, with suppliers or customers, or in the community where the company operates or makes social investments
- Risks or opportunities associated with employment of **young workers** in direct operations or in the supply chain
- Risk or prevalence of **illegal child labour** in key markets or within the supply chain
- Understanding how **marketing strategies** affect children and opportunities to improve marketing practices to support children's rights
- How to ensure that products and services **do not cause mental, moral or physical harm** to children
- How to avoid promotion of **products or services that serve or lead to exploitation of children**
- Opportunities to develop products and services that are essential to children's survival and/or beneficial to their well-being
- Impact of **resettlement, livelihood displacement or land use** on children's health, access to social services and well-being
- **Impacts of business operations** based in local communities
- Understand how future or existing **community investment** initiatives will directly benefit children by investigating quality, access and need for social services, or if investments may cause adverse consequences such as inequality and conflict
- **Impact of contractors on community**, such as conflict in access to jobs or access to supply-chain opportunities and the implications on household spending
- Specific **impacts of conflict** (labour disputes, community conflict, etc.) on children's well-being and how to tailor programmes to mitigate such impacts.

Prioritizing specific child rights issues for engagement may be determined by the results of a materiality assessment or conducted as part of a human rights impact assessment. Engagement may also take place based on the results of assessments to obtain information about specific child rights risks or opportunities, as well as inform the necessary actions to address them. Depending on the objective for engagement, a company can prioritize issues for engagement based on two dimensions:

1. **For respecting children's rights:** An evaluation of the *severity of adverse impacts* on children as rights holders. 'Severity' is defined in terms of the scale, scope and irremediable character of impacts; it is intended not as an absolute concept, but relative to any other human rights impacts that the company has identified.[8]

2. **For supporting children's rights:** An appraisal of the *level of opportunity to advance* children's rights, aligned with core business competencies, such as products, services and influence with business partners and other stakeholders.

The severity of adverse impacts (respect) and the level of opportunity to advance children's rights (support) can be assessed with information collected on the following criteria: [9]

- **Number** of children likely to be affected
- **Length of impacts** (short, medium or long-term)
- **Nature of impact** (direct, indirect, cumulative)
- **Likelihood** that the impact will occur
- **Gravity or consequences** of the negative impact (risk of death, violence, exploitation or ill health – both mental and physical)
- **Whether there is a multiplier effect** that increases positive or negative impacts on any group of children
- **Whether particularly disadvantaged** children are likely to be more affected positively or negatively
- **Capacity to cope with or remediate** potential negative impacts through realistic, set-in-advance mitigation measures.

1.4 Levels of engagement

In preparing for engagement, it is important to consider what level of engagement is most appropriate for the company. Stakeholder engagement on children's rights is useful for companies depending on the level of severity or opportunity of its impact on children's rights (*see Section 1.3*), the size of the enterprise, and the nature and context of the operation.[10] Companies for which child rights issues are a high priority may determine the need for a more involved engagement strategy.

Table 2 maps out the cumulative levels of engagement moving from 'no engagement' to 'collaboration with key stakeholders'. As companies face a higher level of risk or opportunity to impact children's rights, they will move from left to right, signifying greater intensity of engagement and therefore requiring a higher level of commitment from the company. For each level of engagement, Table 2 explains when this would be relevant for a company, describes the actions companies would take, and lists examples of the types of activities. Additional details for each column appear below the table.

8 This definition of 'severity' is based on the commentaries for principles 14 and 24 of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. *See*: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, United Nations, New York and Geneva, 2011, pp. 15, 26.

9 European Union and United Nations Children's Fund, 'Module 5: Child Impact Assessment', *EU-UNICEF Child Rights Toolkit: Integrating child rights in development cooperation*, UNICEF Programme Division, New York, 2014. Available from: www.unicef.org/eu/crtoolkit/toolkit.html

10 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, United Nations, New York and Geneva, 2011, p. 18.

Table 2: Levels of engagement

	A. No engagement	B. Monitor	C. Inform	D. Consult		E. Collaborate
				1. With child rights stakeholders	2. With children directly	
RELEVANCE	When there is minimal risk of potential impact for the company or low company commitment to a child rights issue, or children are not considered to be a key stakeholder group	When child rights issues are considered material; no immediate plans to take actions but necessary to improve understanding of stakeholder positions or developments	When an issue is strategic importance but there is no capacity for long-term involvement with a stakeholder or the impact assessed is low	When seeking to assess impacts on children or change business approach due to a major risk or opportunity confronting the company	When children can provide information that isn't accessible through their other stakeholders	When seeking to change business approach and position the company as a leader on the issue, or ensure that impacts are managed, mitigated, compensated
ACTION	Not directing communication or messages towards child rights stakeholders	Paying attention to the actions of child rights stakeholders	Pushing information towards key stakeholders, sometimes for the purpose of education (can be the results of an impact assessment or the mitigation measures taken)	Exchanging information with children or child rights stakeholders by initiating or participating in two-way dialogue focused on mutual learning and problem solving		Explicit development of opportunities to work on shared objectives by the company and its stakeholders
EXAMPLES	Not monitoring their activities	Media scans, Internet searches and dialogue with other parties	Messaging through reporting, media campaigns, letters, blogs, direct meetings	Soliciting information on impacts or explicit feedback or input on a project or strategy	Soliciting children's views and information to understand business impacts	Partnership on joint project to achieve specific objectives that also involves engagement; formalized agreements

Column A: Not all companies will have determined the relevance or materiality of child rights issues to the business, nor consider children as a priority stakeholder group because of the minimal risk of potential impact on children.

Columns B and C: Other companies may have identified child rights issues as material, but do not consider them a priority due to limited potential or actual impact, or do not presently have plans to take specific actions on the issue. Others might simply not have the capacity for direct engagement with children or child rights stakeholders. As reflected in Table 2, companies for which direct consultation is not currently a priority or not possible can use information that is already publicly available. Small- and medium-sized enterprises, for example, will need to weigh the resource implications of engaging specific stakeholder groups against their level of impact.[11]

Columns D and E: Companies with operations, locations or products/services that pose severe child rights risks or, conversely, present significant opportunities to advance children's well-being will want to consider meaningful consultation with stakeholders on children's rights. Consultation is necessary when a company is planning on conducting a human rights impact assessment and is seeking to incorporate perspectives on child rights impacts.

Consultation is particularly relevant for those companies that are seeking to change their business approach to a particular child rights issue and would benefit from consulting affected stakeholders to seek their specific views. Such consultation would entail two-way dialogue whereby the company solicits stakeholder perspectives, listens and responds to their concerns, integrates that information into internal decision-making processes, and then re-engages with stakeholders about how their concerns were taken into account.[12]

When considering engaging on child rights impacts, companies need to determine whether they can engage with child rights advocates, or whether they should engage with children directly (*see Section 2.3 for guidance on determining when to consult children directly*).

11 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, The Corporate Responsibility to Respect Human Rights: An interpretive guide, United Nations, Geneva and New York, 2012, p. 43. www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HR.PUB.12.2_En.pdf

12 Shift and Institute for Human Rights and Business, *ICT Sector Guide on Implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, European Commission, 2012, p. 38, http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sustainable-business/files/csr-sme/csr-ict-hr-business_en.pdf

COMPANY EXAMPLE: Securing social license to operate through community engagement, including child outreach

Canadian mining company Sherritt International's Ambatovy nickel mine and refinery is the largest industrial complex in Madagascar. When Sherritt was preparing for construction in 2007, local communities were optimistic about the economic benefits and curious about mining and what Sherritt was doing. There was also considerable suspicion, and rumours and misinformation were circulating. Moreover, Madagascar has a high population under the age of 20. Because Sherritt's presence in the community will extend for over 30 years, it was crucial to build a lasting relationship with the community, build awareness of its activities, and understand community perspectives. Children represent the company's future workforce and supply chain, making them critical stakeholders to the company's future success.

Sherritt undertook a broad-based community outreach initiative, targeting the general population, including children. The company identified known credible institutions and groups to approach for consultation, and also to identify other relevant stakeholders. Part of the initiative entailed engaging teachers, parents and community leaders to build a level of trust with these stakeholders, before working with schools and youth organizations.

Child engagement sessions were led by trained Malagasy employees from the community relations, environment and communications teams. Sessions, which took the form of small and large group visits and even tours of the mine and refinery, would start with an oral presentation containing visuals, including videos, photos, comic books, posters and music. Sessions are interactive so that information about the company is presented and children are also encouraged to ask questions and share perspectives.

PART II: WHO SHOULD BE ENGAGED

Part II provides guidance to companies on how to identify and prioritize child rights stakeholders, including groups of children, child rights advocates who hold expertise on a specific issue, and other adults that are in close contact with children and can provide insight into their behavioural patterns.

2.1 Identifying child rights stakeholders

Engagement on children's rights can be carried out with a broad range of stakeholders. Stakeholders who are consulted on broader human rights issues can also be consulted for their perspective on children's rights.

For most companies, treating children as a key stakeholder group or understanding how they are impacted by business operations will not require consulting with children directly. Rather, clarity around child rights impacts can often be obtained from adults who have close contact with children or expertise in children's rights.

Companies should first consider engaging with child rights advocates who can provide information in assessing the situation of children's rights in a particular context. In some cases, these advocates have direct access to children. Such advocates can be defined as organizations or individuals that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Have knowledge of children's issues (understanding of a specific issue and/or local context)
- Are recognized by the affected community where children's rights are impacted to be able to speak on behalf of children's experiences and/or views
- Represent the best interests of children in terms of their specific needs, capabilities and rights (organizations or individuals who have a professional responsibility to represent the best interests of children)
- Have some form of training or can demonstrate skills that enable them to better understand and represent children's concerns, needs and rights.

Companies can also engage with individuals who do not necessarily hold any expertise on child rights, but because they are in close contact with/in the vicinity of affected children, are thus able to provide insights on:

- Children's behavioural patterns
- Behaviour or activities of others that might pose positive or negative impacts on children

Companies will need to identify different stakeholders either by the specific child rights issue at hand or their ability to speak to a broad range of child rights issues. This step involves identifying the relevant groups, organizations and individuals that may offer the company multiple perspectives on the issue. In order to do this, companies will need to look beyond the most obvious stakeholder groups to include groups that are indirectly impacted through their products and services or business relationships along the value chain.

Companies can identify stakeholders through a combination of desk research and relying on their existing networks of stakeholders to identify local organizations and/or individuals. Going through existing connections with organizations or individuals that already have an established relationship with the company – and a solid understanding of the business and its core impacts – may be able to provide insightful recommendations for further engagement.

Various types of organizations and individuals can act as child rights stakeholders, as shown in Table 3. For example, government entities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work with children or youth organizations may be able to provide useful information about particular child rights issues. Social services organizations or individuals such as health-care professionals, teachers or social workers who work directly with children can also be important sources of information. Parents or company personnel can also provide key insights about children's welfare and behavioural patterns.

Table 3: Child rights stakeholder groups

Stakeholder group	Examples
Youth organizations	Children's clubs and child-led clubs (organizations that are run for children and by children) organized through schools, community centres, NGOs, government, places of worship, etc.
Civil society and international organizations	NGOs, community-based organizations or multilateral organizations that have a direct focus on children and youth (e.g., UNICEF, Save the Children, Plan International) or that have a direct interest in the specific issue that is being explored (e.g., focus on natural resource use, environmental pollution, community development, online security)
Academic experts	Individuals with professional or academic expertise on child rights or a particular issue that have done research on child development issues (e.g., children's vulnerabilities in the online world, environmental pollution)
Parents/caregivers	Guardians, who can provide insights about children's welfare, their activities or use of resources (e.g., company donations or government services)
Government	National or local committees or ministries for children (e.g., ministry of education), children's ombudsperson and children's commissioners; national human rights commissions, which may also work on child rights issues in the absence of a children's ombudsman
Businesses/suppliers	Companies that are sector peers, or are operating in the same geographical area or present in the same value chain – such companies can provide insights on child rights issues and how they are addressing their impacts, either on an individual or collaborative basis
Labour organizations	Trade union, labour union or other labour organizations that can provide insight on working conditions of workers with families or of young workers
Professionals in contact with children and/or community leaders	Teachers, doctors, health workers, lawyers, child protection and/or social workers; village or community leaders and religious leaders who may have knowledge about the welfare of children (e.g., illness due to water pollution in the village)
Company personnel	Company staff (e.g., security personnel), who may be able to share insights about the behaviour or activities of children in the local community
Children	Groups of children (e.g., young workers, community members, children of employees) that may be positively or negatively impacted by business

It is important to note that children are not a homogeneous stakeholder group. Like other stakeholder groups, companies will need to determine how subgroups of children are impacted differently or with more severity, and how children may be impacted at different levels of the value chain. Business impacts can be felt more severely on particular child groups made vulnerable by industry activity. Such insights can be gathered through desk-based research and discussions with stakeholders.

An initial stakeholder mapping can also be useful for identifying which groups of children are likely to be impacted and whether they should be included in the engagement process.

Companies can consider various sub-groups of children based on:

- Gender
- Age
- Socio-economic status
- Rural versus urban
- Migrants
- In and out of school
- Disability
- Indigenous children
- Children belonging to minority groups based on nationality, ethnicity, religion or language
- Other at-risk groups (e.g., children of sex workers, child labourers, street children, orphans)

COMPANY EXAMPLE: Engaging a range of child rights stakeholders in a human rights impact assessment at the community level

Nomogaia, a non-profit that builds and tests tools for corporate human rights due diligence, conducted a human rights impact assessment of uranium mining and production company Paladin Energy's operations in Malawi. Children were identified as a key rights holder group across a number of dimensions including health, environment, labour, education, land acquisition, security and social investment programs. As part of the assessment, Nomogaia conducted interviews with youth, plus a range of stakeholders including ministry of education personnel and teaching staff, clinicians and parents. Nomogaia also interviewed relevant mine personnel such as members of the security, community relations and environmental monitoring teams. Youth and children were engaged in group settings at school, in order to obtain their perspectives on their community, school quality, and their aspirations and fears. The assessment revealed improvements in school facilities, the quality of education, maternal and infant health care, HIV/AIDS services and youth employment.

However, the assessment also revealed negative impacts on children's rights. The presence of wealth in the mine area attracted criminal gangs, who were hiring children to syphon fuel from company trucks. Additionally, mine operations and trucks were generating dust near the local primary school. As a result, the company facilitated an intervention with local families and law enforcement in a series of efforts to stem criminal activity and protect children from both criminal elements and the risks of fuel syphoning. Paladin also partnered with the neighbouring coal mine to install speed bumps in front of the school, reroute the road away from the school, and monitor air quality.

2.2 Prioritizing stakeholders

The next step in determining which stakeholders to engage involves prioritizing the initial list of organizations and/or individuals to understand who they are and what they might expect in an engagement with the company – for example, expressing opinions or grievances on a particular issue, participating in open and honest dialogue, requesting specific operational changes or adherence to performance standards or guidelines, or engaging in a formal partnership.

The following criteria can assist companies in evaluating and prioritizing a target group of stakeholders for engagement on child rights issues as part of their existing stakeholder selection processes:

- **Legitimacy:** How legitimate is the stakeholder's claim for engagement on child rights or a specific child rights issue? Do they have broad support from or acknowledged expertise within the community? In certain scenarios, does the stakeholder have consent to represent the children/community?
- **Willingness:** What is the stakeholder's willingness to engage with business? Is there interest on behalf of the stakeholder and sufficient overlap between the objectives and concerns of the company and those of the stakeholder?
- **Knowledge:** Does the stakeholder have an understanding of how children are affected by a particular impact? Do they have knowledge that could be helpful to the company and community?
- **Influence:** Does the stakeholder have regional, national or international influence on public debate around this issue? If so, with whom does the stakeholder hold sway, for example, with other companies, NGOs, consumers, investors?
- **Contact with children:** Does the stakeholder have access to children's viewpoints and opinions? Do they have first-hand knowledge of children's experiences? Can they accurately represent children's wishes and interests?

Once the company has identified which criteria to use as the basis for its stakeholder selection, it can prioritize stakeholders using a matrix to visualize the linkages to engagement objectives and prioritize groups or individuals depending on their relevance or topic or local context. Companies will need to identify potential stakeholders from relevant stakeholder categories listed in Table 3. This prioritization will depend largely on the topic or issue and the local context. It is also important for stakeholder prioritization to be refreshed regularly – for example, according to ongoing human rights impact assessments, at different stages of the project life cycle, when a company enters a new market or geographical area, or when a new product or service is launched.

The matrix in Figure 2 offers an example of how companies can prioritize stakeholders using the selection criteria. A company would fill in the matrix with possible stakeholders, the issues for which it would like to engage, and the selection criteria it will use to prioritize stakeholders. Next, it would match the stakeholders with the issues and selection criteria. The completed matrix will help the company decide which stakeholders to engage.

Figure 2: Stakeholder mapping matrix

People/ Organizations/ Groups	Issues				Criteria					Notes
	Child labour	Sexual exploitation	Advertising	Health	Legitimacy	Knowledge	Influence	Contact with children	Willingness	
Stakeholder #1										
Stakeholder #2										
Stakeholder #3										
Stakeholder #4										
Stakeholder #5										

COMPANY EXAMPLE: Prioritizing stakeholders for a child rights impact assessment

Cellular telephony service provider Millicom and its subsidiary Tigo identified child labour as a key risk area across its 13 markets, based on risk assessments focusing on labour standards in the telecommunications sector, carried out in 2012. As a response, Millicom commissioned Two Tomorrows to conduct a child rights impact assessment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, specifically to obtain a better understanding of direct and indirect impacts in its operations, local distribution network and supply chain.

The assessment included internal and external stakeholder interviews with Tigo staff, sales agents and freelancers, suppliers, peer companies and NGOs working on children's rights. In addition, it involved international organizations that could provide well-informed inputs on child rights risks and opportunities, as defined in the Children's Rights and Business Principles. The objective was to understand the use of child labour in the sale and distribution of prepaid calling cards specifically, and in the telecommunications value chain in general.

Two Tomorrows engaged child rights advocates such as the Ministry of Education, the Local Hospice for Street Kids, and a consortium of 26 local NGOs focused on child labour and abuse. A number of the selected stakeholders work actively with children and were able to share viewpoints and knowledge during the assessment.

Although the assessment did not find evidence of child labour in Tigo's employee base or distribution network, the stakeholders cited the common practice of children working for family businesses, small producers, transporters and traders in the informal economy. Given the level of risk present in the local operating environment, Millicom identified specific actions to prevent potential child rights abuses – including the clarification of child labour policy positions, strengthening of internal verification and control mechanisms on adherence to its policy, and the implementation of stronger remediation mechanisms.

2.3 When to consult children directly

In most scenarios, companies should consult child rights advocates to understand their perspectives on how children are impacted. Only in limited circumstances would companies find it necessary to consult with children directly. Direct consultation with children can do more harm than good if not carried out appropriately and ethically. Triangulation with other sources of information from child rights advocates or adult key informants – such as police, company personnel, community leaders and health workers – can often yield sufficient information.

However, adults do not always have sufficient insight into children's daily lives to be able to provide comprehensive or fully accurate information into a company's assessment process. Disaggregating children's perspectives from the community or household level is important because they may be silenced within the family or their views not solicited or understood because of their age or gender. For example, evidence shows that parents may have very little awareness of children's online activities, and therefore may be unaware of the impacts related to advertising, grooming, gaming and social media.[13][13] The differential impacts of a product or service on their lives may not be recognized. There may also be situations where consent is needed from key stakeholders, including children, and companies cannot assume that their agreement is covered through consent of their parents or guardians.

Children can offer unique perspectives and opinions about their experiences and, in certain scenarios, only children have the knowledge or facts that derive from their direct experiences. Depending on the issue and need for engagement, business assessments and decisions that are informed by children's opinions can be more relevant, more effective and more sustainable.

Direct consultation with children always requires prior engagement with other child rights stakeholders and experts who have an understanding of child rights issues. These resources can help companies identify facilitators who have the training and background to apply child protection standards during direct consultations with children.

Engagement on children's rights should be sincere. Before engagement, companies should clarify their motivation and specific issues for engagement – setting out a vision that defines both the objectives for the business and the benefits for children. When consulting children directly, companies should identify specific topics for consultation, rather than expect children to provide input on focus areas for sustainability or human rights strategy.

Companies should consider the following questions internally before pursuing direct consultation:

- Does the company have a genuine motivation to engage (e.g., for the purposes of understanding impacts, feeding into sustainability strategy vs. for the purposes of tokenism or publicity) and intention to act upon outcomes?
- What are the specific issues on which the company will consult children?
- Will the engagement with children be well informed and ethical (e.g., children are treated with respect and without discrimination, they are fully aware of the purpose of the engagement and how the findings will be used, their engagement is voluntary at all stages, and due weight is given to their contributions)?
- Does the company have the capacity and time to effectively engage with children and work with the relevant organizations to carry out meaningful consultations? Will engagement with children be useful to the company?
- Will there be a return to the stakeholder for engaging in terms of company action on an issue or improved outcomes for children?
- Will the engagement benefit children? Other rights holders?

Depending on the business sector and objective for engagement, companies can determine whether to consult with children directly according to the considerations provided in Table 4.

13 UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, *Child Safety Online: Global challenges and strategies*, United Nations Children's Fund, Florence, Italy, May 2012, p. 7, www.unicef.org/pacificislands/ict_eng.pdf

Table 4: Determining when to consult children directly

Scenarios	Examples
When children can provide information that cannot be accessed through other child rights stakeholders	• Research on impacts affecting subgroups of children who are disadvantaged, out-of-reach, physically remote or disabled and for whom little information is available on specific issues, or where child rights stakeholders cannot be identified • Input on situations that are not captured through conversations with adults or other affected stakeholder groups due to their sensitivity or intentional omission (e.g., economic contributions of children through child labour; exploitation or violence against children) [14] • Input about topics, incidences or impacts in countries where there is no tradition of children speaking up on their own behalf and, therefore, little is known about certain topics unless children are consulted directly • Observations of children's behaviour and whether certain subgroups are silenced or marginalized by others
When children's direct voices will provide additional information to the input of child rights advocates or other key informants	• Input on how children spend their time (e.g., implications on the use of child labour) or other resources • Input on any discrimination that children face • Input on how children experience or use a product or service • Input on children's consumption of goods, services, or donations (e.g., ensure that goods are actually reaching children) • Insights into the impacts of business operations on different members of the household
When adults' comments need to be validated	• Validation of inputs from line managers on the amount of hours worked or working conditions of young workers • Validation of inputs from teachers or other community members on services or goods received through company's community initiatives • Validation of whether consent given by parents/guardians adequately reflects the child's position

While companies may determine that direct consultation is not appropriate, there are other modes for children to provide feedback as relevant, including feedback boxes and grievance channels.

Part II

14 United Nations Children's Fund and World Bank, 'Integrating a Child Focus into Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA)', *Guidance Note*, World Bank Group, Washington, D.C., September 2011, p. 52, www.childimpact.unicef-irc.org/documents/view/id/130/lang/en

COMPANY EXAMPLE: Building on local customs to engage youth

Engaging the local community was critical for a gold mining company to maintain its social license to operate in Cote d'Ivoire. Since children and young people represent a large percentage of the population, they were considered a key stakeholder group by the company, which could not assume that acceptance of mining operations by the adults automatically translated into support from young people.

In accordance with local custom, the village chief and his notables represented the most prevalent voices in community meetings, making it a challenge for the company to obtain youth input into policies and processes that affected them. Previous consultations had demonstrated that youth's perspectives weren't being heard (e.g. the company built a community center based on the consultation, yet children and young people weren't using the center because they would have preferred a health center).

In order to ensure that youth voices were part of community outreach, the company developed a non-traditional form of engagement building on the strengths of local customs (e.g. incorporation of singing and dancing), and trained on-the-ground staff in basic participatory research methods. The company established a peer education program to spread awareness on key health messages and at the same time obtain input on company impacts. Peer educators, chosen by and for their communities, were trained in health education to reach out to youth in their villages. Youth were also encouraged to share their perspectives on how mining construction impacted their lives and community.

All feedback was recorded in 'compressed meeting minutes,' a type of documentation adapted from traditional documentation practices to efficiently record relevant data. The data was then organized and used to guide the work of the community relations team, the company's employee recruitment strategy, and the execution of community development programmes. Youth continue to be engaged separately during community development needs assessments, a step that precedes any decision to build or repair community infrastructure (i.e. boreholes, clinics, pharmacies, schools, etc.).

PART III: HOW TO CONSULT CHILDREN DIRECTLY

Part III provides guidance on companies' consultation process in terms of the before, during, and after. This section provides key requirements for the ethical and appropriate involvement of children in direct consultation processes that companies must consider.

Direct consultation with children requires particular sensitivities and, like engagement with other groups, necessitates attention to any barriers to participation – including age, gender, language, cultural beliefs and norms, among many others. It also requires additional caution or capacity in ensuring that children do not experience exploitation, harm or retaliation as a result of participation in the process.

When children are involved, companies should also be mindful of actual or perceived power imbalances. Consultation requires the support of a neutral, trusted individual to facilitate the engagement process (*see Appendix I: Criteria for effective facilitation*). Moreover, direct consultations with children must be conducted with respect for all children's rights, including their right to privacy, protection from any form of violence or abuse, and freedom of thought.

When consulting children directly, companies should take into account the considerations listed in the following box:

Overarching considerations for all business engagement directly with children

Developed through a process led by UNICEF, UN Global Compact and Save the Children— together with companies and other stakeholders—the Children's Rights and Business Principles call on businesses to:

1. Participation should be voluntary, with informed consent from the child in written or oral form, and from the parents and caregivers.
2. Consultation topics should have a clear purpose and focus on specific issues that are relevant to children's lives and concerns.
3. Children's time is precious, and engagements should fit in with their daily routines.
4. Child rights stakeholders should also be consulted throughout the process.
5. Companies should rely on expert third-party facilitation, regardless of the chosen approach.
6. Consultations should be part of a wider long-term approach to stakeholder engagement.
7. Child safeguards and confidentiality should be ensured throughout the process.
8. Consultations should be carried out with respect for the cultural practices, beliefs and norms of each community or group.

These considerations are explained in greater detail in the guidance on proper steps to take before, during and after consultation, which are outlined in Sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3. They are based on accepted child rights principles on the involvement of children in any research process, specifically the 'Basic Requirements for Effective and Ethical Children's Participation' – which were adopted into the Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment on article 12 of the CRC[15] and have been adapted for a business context, with respect to human rights due diligence, in this tool.

15 Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard, CRC/C/GC/12, United Nations, Geneva, 1 July 2009. Available from: www.refworld.org/docid/4ae562c52.html

COMPANY EXAMPLE: Child consultations in Kenya on sexual exploitation of children in tourism

Kuoni, a global travel and destination management services company based in Switzerland, conducted its first human rights impact assessment in 2012, in Kenya, with a special focus on violations of children's rights linked to the commercial exploitation of children in tourism.

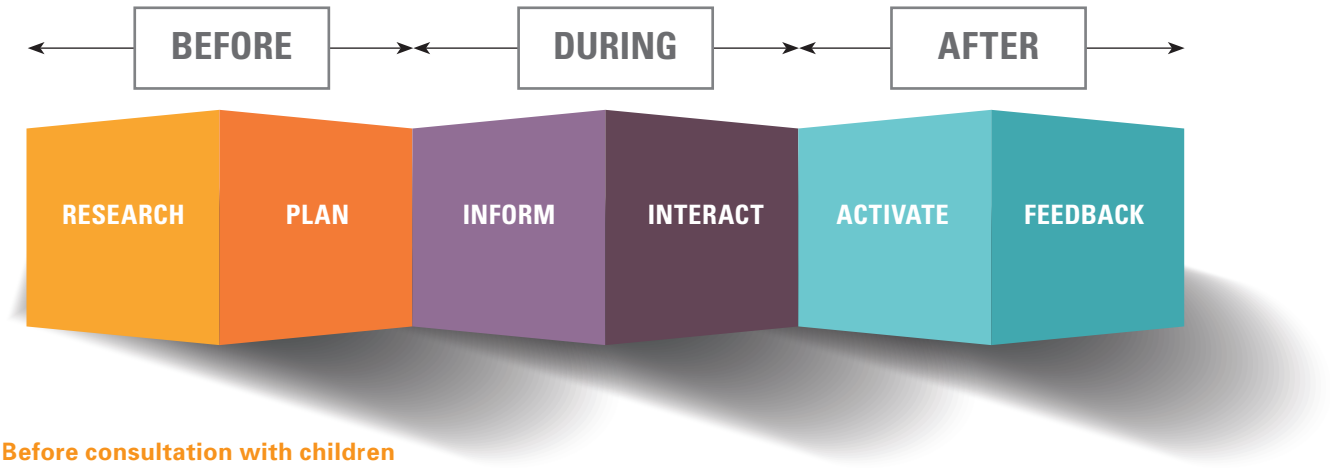
Focus group meetings were held with children who were exploited in the sex industry. The guiding questions for these interactions sought to establish: the casual and systemic factors leading to children's involvement in sex work in the tourism sector; how participants perceived the industry and government to be responding; and what needs to happen to address the situation in a meaningful way. The interactions were facilitated by an experienced local NGO, including a social worker, who advised on an appropriate approach and language.

The consultations revealed that the commercial sexual exploitation of children by tourists in Kenya is perpetuated by poverty and socio-economic marginalization, including exclusion from employment and training opportunities in the tourism sector. Children who have been exploited in the sex industry may lack access to alternative income-generating activities. They are often victimized by the police, and societal perceptions have led to a failure to recognize sexual abuse and exploitation as an issue – particularly in how it affects boys.

Engagement outcomes of this assessment fed into a human rights action plan for 2013–2014, which was implemented by Kuoni and Private Safaris, its subsidiary in Kenya, in collaboration with relevant local stakeholders.

Once companies have determined the relevance of direct consultations with children, it is recommended that they review the steps depicted in Figure 3 to ensure appropriate considerations are taken into account before, during and after the consultation:

Figure 3: Steps for carrying out direct consultations with children



3.1 Before consultation with children

Research

Prior to any consultations, companies should conduct research to adequately understand the background and local context of the child rights risks and opportunities.

Step	Description	Important considerations
Conduct research on the child rights issue	Conduct preliminary research to understand how child rights impacts are manifested in the specific context and the local setting.	A company should investigate the risks or opportunities on specific affected child groups (*see section 2.1*). Companies can also consider the general situation of children in a particular country or at the provincial level as relevant to the topic for engagement.
Consult local experts and child rights advocates	Consult with local experts on the child rights issue and the proposed engagement early on in the planning process.	Child rights advocates can provide their perspectives, opinions and/or concerns on the potential or actual child rights impacts – as well as invaluable advice on the need for consultation, the consultation approach, sensitivities around language or culture, and suggested contacts for reaching out to child stakeholders.

Plan

Once the company has developed an understanding of the local context and confirmed the value of consulting children directly it should work with a third-party facilitator and the local community to plan for the actual consultation with considerations given to child protection, location, accessibility, timing, logistics and facilitation.

Step	Action	Important considerations
Select an expert third-party facilitator	For all engagement methodologies, whether in-person or remote, involve an expert third-party facilitator to ensure impartiality and competence in delivery and planning of the interactions.	Companies will want to ensure that individuals who lead consultations have the skills and experience to facilitate children's participation effectively – including skills in listening, working jointly with children and engaging children according to their evolving capacities.[16] Companies can identify facilitators by consulting with child rights advocates. Facilitators will usually be a local NGO working with children, a member of a child protection committee, a youth leader or a teacher, depending on the situation. In all cases, facilitators should be acceptable to the community and stakeholders involved. They should have extensive experience working with children, speak the local language, have an understanding of the purpose of the data collection, and be equipped to report any cases of child abuse or other occasions requiring immediate referral that arise during the consultation (*see Appendix I: Criteria for effective facilitation*).

16 Lansdown, Gerison, 'The Evolving Capacities of the Child', *Innocenti Insight*, United Nations Children's Fund, Florence, Italy, 2005. Open PDF from: www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/evolving-eng.pdf

Step	Action	Important considerations
Investigate methodologies that suit the purpose of the data collection and the participants' age group	Together with the facilitator, determine the appropriate methodology for consulting children according to the data needs, topic for consultation, target demographic and age group and mobility of the target group[17] (*see Appendix II: Child-friendly consultation approaches*).	The methodology should accommodate and build upon local structures and take into account local social, economic and cultural practices.[18] Focus groups and/or group interviews are best for investigating the breadth and scope of impacts. The length of the session should be appropriate to a child's attention span to both minimize inconvenience to the child and secure high-quality results. If quantitative information is sought and the desired participants have Internet access, an online survey may be most convenient. Age is another factor that should affect the selection of consultation approach. For example, if the issue to be investigated affects 7- to 10-year-olds, online surveys are not recommended.[19] Although giving children an opportunity to take part in consultations can support their right to participate, the time required should not interfere with other rights such as education and recreation. It is important to consider both the appropriate amount of children's time required to participate and the other commitments children have. Breaks should be provided in the sessions to ensure that children do not become fatigued.
Formulate questions with age-appropriate language and content	Work with an experienced professional who can employ their knowledge about age-appropriate concepts and language to formulate questions that are designed for children's different ages and abilities. It is important to specify to the facilitator exactly what information the company seeks to obtain through each question.	If questions are not formulated in respect to the participating children's vocabulary and ability to understand concepts, the questions will be unclear and response quality will decline.[20] Each individual child has different levels of understanding, so questions may have to be rephrased at the discretion of the facilitator at the time of delivery. When developing the questions, the facilitator and the company should consider the following factors: – For younger children, it is best to ask an experience-specific question,[21] and deduce the business impact during analysis; older adolescents, on the other hand, may offer insights about business impact directly. – If discussing sensitive topics, it is best to use general language rather than introducing potentially traumatizing concepts (e.g., sexual exploitation).[22] – Images, drawings and cartoons can be an effective way of communicating with children in any approach.[23] In all cases, information about business impact can be gathered from children through general questions, or by specifically seeking out children who have had direct experience with the business. Facilitators should avoid direct questions and methods that are likely to bring up personal experiences of child abuse that would place the child at risk.

Part III

17 Ólafsson, Kjartan, Sonia Livingstone and Leslie Haddon, *How to Research Children and Online Technologies? Frequently asked questions and best practice*, EU Kids Online and London School of Economics and Political Science, London, May 2013. Open PDF from: www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/BestPracticeGuide/FAQ/FAQsReport.pdf

18 European Union and United Nations Children's Fund, 'Module 3: Child Participation', *EU-UNICEF Child Rights Toolkit: Integrating child rights in development cooperation*, UNICEF Programme Division, New York, 2014. Available from: www.unicef.org/eu/crtoolkit/toolkit.html

19 Borgers, Natacha, Edith de Leeuw and Joop Hox, 'Children as Respondents in Survey Research: Cognitive development and response quality', *Bulletin de Méthodologie Sociologique*, April 2000, pp. 60–75.

20 *See, for example*: Fuchs, Marek, 'The Reliability of Children's Survey Responses: The impact of cognitive functioning on respondent behaviour', Proceedings of Statistics Canada Symposium 2008, Statistics Canada, 2009.

21 Zwiers, Michael L., and Patrick J. Morrissette, *Effective Interviewing of Children: A comprehensive guide for counsellors and human service workers*, Accelerated Development, Taylor & Francis, Philadelphia, 1999.

22 Hoppe, Marilyn J., et al. 'Using Focus Groups to Discuss Sensitive Topics with Children', *Evaluation Review*, vol. 19, no. 1, February 1995, pp. 102–114.

23 Ólafsson, Kjartan, Sonia Livingstone and Leslie Haddon, *How to Research Children and Online Technologies?*, EU Kids Online and London School of Economics and Political Science, London, May 2013.

Step	Action	Important considerations
Identify effective access points to reach children	In collaboration with the facilitator, identify access points for engaging child participants, such as schools, social media, young people's associations, etc.	Local child rights experts will have an understanding of the most appropriate access points for reaching child participants and will have leverage and credibility in the community. Civil society groups, youth organizations, and/or international organizations that work directly with children may be able to facilitate access to children. Consideration must be given to the appropriate time and place to ensure that consultations do not interfere with children's daily routines (school, domestic chores or work) and are conducted in safe locations where they feel comfortable and at ease (e.g., schools, youth centres).
Assess the risks associated with children's participation	Evaluate whether there are any risks posed to children's safety by participating and ensure that appropriate child protection measures are in place	Depending on the risks identified, steps may be needed to protect children's identity or to provide follow-up measures to give protection both during and after the consultation.[24] For example, children may be subjected to punishment from parents or other adults who may be sensitive to sharing information outside the home, to bullying from older children, or retaliation or assault by police, security personnel or other authority figures. Companies and facilitators may also need to consider cultural sensitivities where it is not considered appropriate for children to speak for themselves or with outsiders.
Screen company personnel and intermediaries who will come in contact with children for child abuse offences	Given that the engagement process will be conducted in the name of the company, ensure that all non-company staff involved in the process, in addition to the facilitator, have been screened for any criminal activity or child rights violations.	A criminal history screen/disclosure focusing on child abuse offences is routine or legally required in many countries for those working directly with children. In countries where this is not possible, information should be gathered on the individual's background and through other stakeholder discussions.
Investigate company liabilities under local law for ensuring the safety of child participants (duty of care)	Investigate the company's or individual facilitator's legal obligation for children's safety within the parameters of the consultation or interaction. When working with children, the individual carrying out any interaction has a responsibility to ensure that the consultation does not harm them in any foreseeable way.	Legal responsibility can depend on national legislation. However, accepting duty of care can be an informal agreement and is often assumed. Duty of care is of highest concern for in-person methods, such as focus groups. It can extend, however, to the content of remote approaches such as online interactions. Duty of care should link into existing child protection and support systems on the ground.
Plan for the provision of feedback after the engagement	Feedback should be a significant component of any engagement with children. A tailored feedback loop – detailing what will be communicated, how it will be delivered and when communications will take place – should be planned before starting the interaction with children.	

24 European Union and United Nations Children's Fund, 'Module 3: Child participation', *EU-UNICEF Child Rights Toolkit: Integrating child rights in development cooperation*, UNICEF Programme Division, New York, 2014. Available from: www.unicef.org/eu/crtoolkit/toolkit.html

3.2 During consultation with children

Inform

During the invitation phase, companies should work with the facilitator to ensure proper outreach to child participants and ensure that children are adequately informed of the process.

Step	Action	Important considerations
Inform parents, guardians and/or community members	Inform parents and guardians in children's lives to ensure buy-in and acceptance for the children's participation	Take the time to understand and manage expectations from the wider community regarding the impact of children's participation in the consultation[25] and manage parents'/guardians' expectations of outcomes. Given their investment of time in the engagement process, it is likely that not only the child participants, but also the wider community, would like to understand the impact of their participation in the consultation. Be aware of legal obligations for conducting research. In some countries, obtaining formal consent from parents/guardians for research carried out with children under a certain age is required by law.
Invite and inform child participants	In the context of research on access points, approach, and participant selection, collaborate with the facilitator (and child rights representatives where appropriate) to invite participants based on research and recommendations and inform the participants about the process	Children should be invited to discuss issues that are relevant to their own experience and the wider environment of home, school and community. They should be given sufficient time to consider whether they want to be involved, and it should be made clear that they can withdraw at any point, at their discretion. All participating children should voluntarily agree to be involved in the process without coercion from the company, facilitator or people with authority/guardianship over the children. Depending on the unique context, careful consideration must be given to what constitutes coercion; in some circumstances, even the provision of a meal may influence participation or the nature of feedback provided. Depending on the scenario – and the child's ability to read and understand what they are signing – consent can be granted in written or oral form. Children should be informed of the significance of the engagement, and their different roles and responsibilities, as well as the practicalities[26] such as the time commitment. The participants should be informed about any follow-up action expected if the interaction is a one-time event. To prepare the children for meaningful interaction, all information related to the event should be presented to children in language that is accessible and understandable. If developing informational materials, there is a need to make a distinction between the literacy levels of children aged 7-12 and those aged 13-18 years old.[27]
Obtain permission for participation and photo, video or audio recording	Inform the child participants as well as parents or caregivers (e.g., guardians, teachers or youth organization leaders) on how the recording will be used, and the implications of that usage in terms of who will have access	No photographs, videos or digital images of a child can be taken or published without the child's explicit consent for a specific use. In certain circumstances, communication of recordings and photographs can jeopardize the privacy and/or safety of children. Therefore, the risks must be considered and separate permission sought for their use.[28]

25 United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF Handbook: Children as advocates – Strengthening child and young people's participation in advocacy fora, UNICEF, New York, June 2010. www.unicef.org/southafrica/SAF_resources_childrenadvocates.pdf

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 MediaWise and United Nations Children's Fund, The Media and Children's Rights, 2nd edition, MediaWise and UNICEF, January 2005. Available from: www.mediawise.org.uk/children/the-media-and-childrens-rights

Interact

During the consultation with children, companies will need to work with the third-party facilitator to ensure that participants are treated with respect, and that the engagement is conducted in a manner that takes into account language and other potential barriers to effective engagement.

Step	Action	Important considerations
Facilitate a child-friendly consultation	Whether the consultation is conducted using an in-person or remote approach, collaborate with the facilitator to ensure that the interaction is respectful, culturally sensitive and conducted in an interesting way. The company should also work with the facilitator to ensure a safe environment that respects the rights of the child, guarantees their psychosocial well-being (children are free from pressure/manipulation), protects their privacy and avoids any risk of physical harm (*see Appendix II: Child-friendly consultation approaches*).	Sufficient time and resources should be made available for quality participation and interaction, with care taken to ensure the conversation does not go wider than scope of the research. The facilitator must be aware of children's sensitivity to peer and situational pressures, and the influence of the interaction's psychological setting, such as body language, question tone and background sounds. Children are able and motivated to assess and provide what they perceive as the desired response – which could greatly interfere with the accuracy of the consultation results. Facilitators should avoid direct questions and methods that are likely to bring up personal experiences of child abuse. If evidence of child exploitation or abuse in the context of business activities appears during the consultation, the company should follow up with child rights advocates on appropriate mitigation measures and next steps. If general issues arise in terms of child abuse in other contexts, adequate provisions to respond to cases of abuse should be arranged, and the facilitator should be expected to report any cases to relevant authorities, as appropriate, with the safety and the protection of the child in mind. In some cases, authorities may also be the perpetrators, and the company and facilitators will need to consult with child rights stakeholders to seek advice on appropriate next steps.
Make a complaints procedure available	Review the relevant complaints procedures (or establish one if necessary) to ensure that it supports complaints from children in case they feel the need to submit any concerns with respect to their involvement in the engagement.	Complaints procedures should be communicated to participants and made accessible for children. For example, children may not have access to a phone, computer or email account – so the company should ensure that there is an alternative mechanism in place for children to issue a complaint.

3.3 After consultation with children

Activate

Once the consultation takes place, the company should analyse the results and take steps to integrate the outcomes – then develop an action plan that translates the findings, insights and perspectives gained from the engagement into action.

Step	Action	Important considerations
Synthesize the results and prioritize action points	In collaboration with the facilitator and child rights advocates, review the issues that surfaced during the consultation. For each issue, identify an action point (or rationale for inaction) that takes into consideration the concerns and perceptions of the children, in the context of inputs received from child rights advocates and other relevant stakeholders.	When consolidating and evaluating the data, the reliability of responses should be considered in accordance with the quality of the facilitator and the tools used with children to explore their perspectives and experiences. It is also useful to interpret the findings in a way that is consistent with what the children intended to convey. When prioritizing and deciding on action points, consider the impacts of any changes or implications on the rights of children, their families and caregivers, as some actions may have unintended consequences.
Analyse lessons learned of the participatory process	Reflect and analyse the utility, outcomes and process for engagement, and translate any lessons learned into improvements for future consultations with children.	

6. Feedback

Once the company has taken steps to act upon the information gained through the consultation, it should communicate these actions to the participants and other key stakeholders involved, with the support of the facilitator.

Step	Action	Important considerations
Inform participants of the consultation's outcome and any actions planned as a result	With support from the facilitator, communicate outcomes and subsequent action plans (if the findings merit any actions) to the participants and other relevant stakeholders, using language that is accessible and easy to understand.	Provide contact details for appropriate company representatives for any expected follow up or future inquiries. The company should also inform child participants about further opportunities to engage. Companies should inform other stakeholders involved in the consultation, such as child rights advocates or the children's parents/guardians on how their input was used.
Inform participants about the implementation	Inform participants of the progress once steps have been taken to implement action points developed as a result of the consultation.	
Consider the safety and privacy of children in all business communications	Children's inputs and identities should be help confidential in all internal and external communications (e.g., impact reporting). Consent should be obtained for the use of all information provided by children, and any information provided should be aggregated and safeguarded.	In certain circumstances, a child can be put at risk by breeches of confidentiality. Therefore, pseudonyms should be used when referencing specific children, any photos should have faces blurred, and all other actions necessary should be taken to minimize the risk to children of any negative consequences brought about by their participation in the consultation.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Criteria for effective facilitation

Companies will want to ensure that the staff who lead consultations with children have appropriate skills and experience. While companies often outsource impact assessments and stakeholder engagement to consultancy organizations, it is imperative that direct consultations are facilitated by individuals who are capable of interacting with children in these situations on a basis that respects children and protects their rights. Facilitators should meet the following criteria:

- Willingness and ability to create a safe space for children to express their views
- Awareness of and respect for children's rights
- Commitment to treating every child without discrimination on any grounds
- Equipped with the training and tools to conduct participatory and experiential techniques with children
- Experience in facilitating discussion groups directly with children and young people
- Able to work effectively and confidently with children of different ages and abilities
- Available to address and coordinate child protection issues during the participation process
- Equipped to report any cases or indications of child abuse or other concerns that arise during consultation and require immediate referral to the relevant authorities, with the safety and the protection of the child in mind
- Acceptable to the community and stakeholders involved
- Speak the local language
- Have an understanding of the purpose and topic of the data collection

A good facilitator will:

- Create a safe space for discussion, learning and interaction
- Respect every child without discrimination
- Guide a group's exploration of issues
- Provide and share information
- Be neutral
- Keep the pace moving and lively
- Let participants do most of the talking
- Use humour when appropriate
- Show enthusiasm and interest
- Use good eye contact and body language
- Use a variety of techniques and strategies to keep the consultation interesting
- Challenge the participants
- Promote a positive group dynamic
- Affirm the participants and their contributions

Appendix 2: Child-friendly consultation approaches

Research with children will typically use qualitative methods. Common approaches include focus groups and semi-structured interviews, but consultation can also include online engagement or written surveys.

Method	Description[29]	When Appropriate[30]	Logistical Considerations[31]
Focus group	Focus group discussions are best suited for small groups of children who share similar characteristics, age ranges, experiences or backgrounds. They typically involve 6–12 people, address a specific topic and involve a limited number of questions. Focus group discussions should be led by an experienced facilitator with an understanding of child participation techniques.	• Consultation taking place in one local area • Desire to explore issues in depth • Need to address sensitive topics • When interaction among participants enhances the findings	• Guardian permission • Duty of care • Anonymity • Socially influenced responses • Need for trained facilitator • Permission to record or take photos • Resource intensive • Informal atmosphere in a comfortable place • Visual techniques (drawings or photos) can be used
Inviting written responses from stakeholders	Companies can provide a mechanism for children to submit letters to express their opinions on specific issues around the company's performance or products and services.	• When seeking many inputs • When there are mobility challenges	• Low response rate • Literacy as a barrier • Quantity and quality of information
Online engagement mechanisms	Social media, message boards and/or chat rooms can be used to initiate dialogue with and among children about a specific topic. Companies can pose questions or themes to obtain feedback and understand children's perspectives on a particular issue.	• For quantitative data • When seeking large number of responses • Seeking information across geographical areas	• Data confidentiality • Lack of Internet access can be a barrier to participation • Quantity and quality of information
Written questionnaires or surveys	Questionnaires should use clear language and include graphics or symbols to make it more interesting and understandable for children. Questionnaires or surveys can use a combination of closed questions, true/false questions, multiple-choice questions or open-ended questions.	• Larger groups • Can be quantitative	• Standardized information • Quantity and quality of information

29 *Based on the following source, which provides detailed information on consultation approaches and methodologies*: Lansdown, Gerison, and Claire O'Kane, *A Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation: Booklet 5 – Tools for monitoring and evaluating children's participation*, Save the Children, London, 2014. Available from: www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/toolkit-monitoring-and-evaluating-childrens-participation

30 *Based on:* AccountAbility, *From Words to Action: The stakeholder engagement manual volume 2 – The practitioner's handbook on stakeholder engagement*, AccountAbility, United Nations Environment Programme and Stakeholder Research Associates, October 2005. Open PDF from: www.accountability.org/images/content/2/0/208.pdf

31 Based on: Ólafsson, Kjartan, Sonia Livingstone and Leslie Haddon, How to Research Children and Online Technologies? Frequently asked questions and best practice, EU Kids Online and London School of Economics and Political Science, London, May 2013. Open PDF from: www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/BestPracticeGuide/FAQ/FAQsReport.pdf

Semi-structured or unstructured interviews	Interviews can take the shape of conversations to better understand children's thoughts, ideas, actions and observations. Interviews can be structured (asking the same questions to all participants) or semi-structured (allowing flexibility to add probing questions depending on the flow of conversation and information). Interview questions can be open or closed.	• For children who are uncomfortable with focus groups or performance-based methods • Enable deeper probing for information to better understand nuances and complexities of real-life situations	• Visual techniques (drawings or photos) can be used • Resource-intensive • Guardian permission • Duty of care

Appendix 3: Resources on participation techniques for children and young people

- Boyden, Jo, and Judith Ennew, editors, *Children in Focus: A manual for participatory research with children*, Save the Children Sweden, Stockholm, 1997. Available from: http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/content/library/documents/children-focus-manual-participatory-research-children
- European Union and United Nations Children's Fund, 'Module 3: Child Participation', *EU-UNICEF Child Rights Toolkit: Integrating child rights in development cooperation*, UNICEF Programme Division, New York, 2014. Available from: www.unicef.org/eu/crtoolkit/toolkit.html
- Lansdown, Gerison, and Claire O'Kane, *A Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation: Booklet 4 – A 10-step guide to monitoring and evaluating children's participation*, Save the Children, London, 2014. Available from: www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/toolkit-monitoring-and-evaluating-childrens-participation
- Laws, Sophie, and Gillian Mann, *So You Want to Involve Children in Research? A toolkit supporting children's meaningful and ethical participation in research relating to violence against children*, Save the Children, Stockholm, 2004. Open PDF from: http://images.savethechildren.it/f/download/Policies/st/strumenti.pdf
- Ólafsson, Kjartan, Sonia Livingstone and Leslie Haddon, *How to Research Children and Online Technologies? Frequently asked questions and best practice*, EU Kids Online and London School of Economics and Political Science, London, May 2013. Open PDF from: www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/BestPracticeGuide/FAQ/FAQsReport.pdf
- Save the Children UK, 'Practice Standards in Children's Participation', International Save the Children Alliance, 2005. Available from: www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/practice-standards-children%E2%80%99s-participation
- United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF Handbook: Children as advocates – Strengthening child and young people's participation in advocacy fora*, UNICEF, New York, June 2010. Open PDF from: www.unicef.org/southafrica/SAF_resources_childrenadvocates.pdf

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