



Children's Rights and Business Principles Initiative (CRBPI) Report from Consultation with Children, SCS West Africa, 8-9 July 2011

Ever think about your rights?

Ever wonder who is responsible for making sure your rights are supported and protected?

Ever wonder if businesses and companies should care more about your rights?

Should they be doing more or less to support and protect your rights?

These questions formed the basis for a two-day consultation with Senegalese children with the objective to discuss, explore and collect their views of the impact that businesses have on children's lives, on the draft Business Principles for CRBPI and the action business needs to take to better support and protect children's rights.

The process and outputs of the sessions are documented here in order to contribute to the development of the final version of the CRBPI Business Principles.

This document acknowledges the contribution of all children participating in the consultation as well as the collaboration of ENDA Jeunesse Action.

1. Pre-consultation Process

SCS opted to collaborate with our long-standing partner ENDA Jeunesse Action, the entity within ENDA Tiers Monde that works with children living in difficult situation to improve their working and living conditions and assists them in strengthening their organization. ENDA Jeunesse Action has broad experience and they put a strong emphasis on child participation which was one of the reasons for opting to collaborate with them for the consultation.

The sessions took place 8-9 July 2011 in the "case de Tout Petit de Wakhinane Nimzat" in the suburb of Guediawaye outside Dakar, Senegal. The children represented groups from *Association des Enfants et Jeunes Travailleurs*, a Senegalese movement consisting of working children striving to improve their situations through a rights-based approach, as well as from groups representing Talibé children that are part of a project with ENDA receiving alternative education, trainings on various subjects such child protection and children's rights.

The total number of children was 50 consisting of 30 children representing the working children's movement and 20 representing the Talibé children. The consultation was held in a mix of French and Wolof and the age of the participants ranged between 10 and 18 with the majority being approximately 16 years of age. The gender rates of the participants were approximately 40% boys and 60% girls.

At the initiation of the working session the participants received the child version of the CRC and its principles and the summarized version of the draft Business Principles

of CRBPI. The documents were used during the first day for the children to get a better understanding of Children's Rights and principles, and basic information of CRBPI. The children read the documents and this were followed by Q&A and discussions about the same.

The children participating in the consultation form part of groups which previously have participated in activities with ENDA Jeunesse Action through projects on Working Children and Talibés. The participants therefore had a basic understanding of Children's Rights and Principles. The link between Children's Rights and the private sector was new to the group. In the beginning of the consultation the children found it difficult to see any link between rights and business, and how it could impact them, but as the session progressed, it became evident to the children that there is a link between Children's Rights and the private sector, and that they can influence the private sector to be more respectful.

2. Key Discussions

Introduction

The children were welcomed and introduced to the aim of the consultation and the 2-day agenda. Following the teams from SCS and ENDA Jeunesse Action were introduced; Mrs Ouleye Demba Deme, SCS Senegal Country Program Manager who facilitated the session, M. Ousmane Coulibaly from ENDA Jeunesse Action who reported on the consultation and M. Laurent Duvilliers, SCS Regional Communication Officer who took photos and collected testimonies from children. There was also two technical support staff from ENDA providing support to the key facilitator during the whole consultation. The children did an icebreaker, a cross-presentation, in order to get to know each other.

Children's Rights

As stated above the group had a basic understanding of Children's Rights thanks to previous activities with ENDA Jeunesse Action, but in order to refresh this understanding, and to ensure a similar level of knowledge of all participants, a group-exercise was carried out. It consisted of a discussion of the difference between "Rights", "Needs" and "Desires". The objective of the exercise was to show the link between their Needs and Rights as well as emphasize the importance of the four general principles of the CRC.

The facilitator provided the participants a document describing Children's Rights, which were read out loud and discussed in order to achieve a greater understanding.

This was followed by an interactive presentation where two of the groups carried out sketches on "Participation" and "Non-discrimination". The objective of this exercise was to complement their theoretical understanding with action learning for an easier comprehension. The children expressed through the sketches that their participation is crucial to achieve change.

Private Sector Impact on Children's Rights

In introducing the part of business/ private sector, the children were asked to identify a company or business they know and to give their views on its impact (positive and negative) on Children's Rights. Children used examples of e.g. factories, general stores, small local food stores, and corporations. The children identified the following problems and solutions.

Problems	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cigarettes and alcohol is bad for the health ● Ammonia reduces life expectancy ● Salt destroys the skin ● Use of harmful products ● The sale of liquor in sachets is cheap and easy to buy for children ● Factories can destroy the health and they cause cancer and respiratory problems for the employees. ● The use of children in advertizing ● Pollution of the environment ● Fires in factories can result in death or physical handicaps ● Recruitment of minors ● Bad smells from chemical factories ● They use chemical products that can cause health problems and cut the life expectancy of the employees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sale of cigarettes and alcohol only as of age 18 ● Participation in the promotion of Children's Rights ● Protect workers with masks and gloves ● Control the selling of alcohol ● Ensure that the milk consumed by children is good for them and favors growth. ● Make safer work places and rooms. ● Factory owners should know the rights of children ● Factories should be located far away from the places where the people live. ● Factory owners to provide free medication and medical consultations to the people living close the factories ● For business located close to communities to give financial support for training and education of children ● They should stop of hiring children less than 18 years.

The discussion was followed by looking at some specific examples of companies in West Africa, looking at both positive and negative impacts for children, their families/communities and the environment.

	Positive impact	Negative impact
Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of houses, mosques, schools and other buildings • Construction of infrastructure such as airports, roads and stadiums • Creates employment for their families • The factory pays taxes that can be used for different things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pollution affect eyes and body • The factory does not control wasted cement which the children collect and sell. This is not good for the health and it can have an impact of the time they should be going to school. • Children are victims to economic exploitation (e.g. parents influencing their children to sell waste cement as well as adults buying from other children. • Children are victims of physical exploitation in the process of selling waste cement (e.g. sexual abuse) • Death of children' parents working in the factory since they are not well protected.
Families/ Communities		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diseases for employees (e.g. tuberculosis, asthma, bronchitis, cancer). • The fumes cut the life expectancy of employees. • No use of gloves or masks • Food becomes polluted since the factory does not control used cement packing which people then collect and use when selling food • Death of factory workers
The environment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenhouse gases • Pollution • Destruction of nature • Land degradation

3. Recommendations and Priorities set by Children

Children came up with recommendations and priorities based on the negative impact previously identified. The children were split into the same groups as before and the task was to identify solutions. The recommendations were:

For children

- For the factory owner to set up protection barriers to keep the waste cement away from children.
- Factories to hire security personnel to control children's access to the plant.
- For children's organizations to set up sessions to inform children of the negative impact that business can have on their lives and what the children can do about it
- For factories to provide medical insurance including the children of employees.
- Only employ factory workers over 18 years of age.
- The factory owners should respect Children's Rights. CRC posters should be put up on the walls and be visible for all.
- Factory owners to take security measures so that the parents are protected.

For Families and Communities:

- Organize sensitization at community level to inform about rights and the negative impact of business and solutions
- Relocate factories far away from homes and nature
- Provide employees adequate protection equipment
- Factory owner to provide medical insurance for employees and their families.
- Strengthening security around the factories to protect the community
- The factory needs to control and limit high truck loads to avoid accidents

For the environment:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Avoid using toxic products to protect the soil
- The factory to control their used packing material so that it is not accessible for people (since they use it and it is dangerous for the health)
- Protect the waste deposits of cement so it does not affect the environment and surrounding population.
- Protection from dangerous metals and other harmful products.

After analyzing the solutions to identified problems the children came up with the following prioritization of their recommendations. The discussion was based on feasible and realistic solutions.

1. For business to know and to be respectful towards Children's Rights. Send copies of the CRC to the owners and sensitize them on Children's Rights.
2. Factories to hire security personnel to control children's access to the plant.
3. Set up storage rooms for dangerous product so that children do not have access.
4. Sensitization of parents and employees on Children's Rights
5. Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
6. Factories to provide free medication and medical consultations to the people living close the factories
7. Avoid employment of minors under 18
8. Prevent children from playing around factories.
9. Provide health insurance for employees and their families
10. The children together with ENDA to do TV debates on the Convention on the Rights of the Child
11. The factory owners need to control and limit high truck loads to avoid accidents

After these discussions, the facilitator again shared the main sections of the draft Business Principals looking at what businesses can and should do in order better support and protect children's rights. The children agree in principle on the Draft Principles, but for them the key issues and priorities are as presented above, since that is their reality and what they relate to with regards to business.

4. Testimonies from children who participated in the consultation

(Girl), 16 years old

"Near my house in my neighborhood, there is a small factory where some fish gets smoked. But there is also another company that collects what is left of the fish to produce broth powder. This fish garbage is really stinking. Everyone knows this is harmful to our health. When people hear that the company is on its way to collect the trash, all the neighbors start running and closing their doors. The smell is really terrible and we know it's bad for our health. We know there is an impact. When it is hot, the smell becomes so strong that it prevents us from getting out of our houses and enjoying our outdoor area."

"There are also children working as domestic servants or in the workshops. In most cases, the problem faced by these children is that the type of work they do is too heavy. It isn't suitable neither for their strength nor for their age. This is the reason why these children fall sick easily. If these children are not placed in training institutions, they become grown-ups but cannot fend for themselves and meet their own needs. This is the reason why we must support and train them. Their current jobs will not allow them to grow tomorrow."

"The activities of the companies have also some positive aspects, especially economically. The people who work in these factories are making a living. Thanks to their jobs, they manage to feed their families. Another plus is that this company produces something that is used by people as a food item in the everyday life. I don't believe that closing the plant that produces fish broth would be the solution. We should not close it otherwise people will lose their jobs. But it should be relocated to a more distant place far away, where it can no longer have a negative impact on people's lives."

"One of the rules that all companies should follow before establishing themselves in an area is to "see" if they will not have a negative impact on the lives of people living around the place they have chosen. In local markets, there are often no rules. Basic cleanliness is often not ensured. In these markets, children are requested to do some work that is too heavy for them and doesn't take into account their age. This kind of hard work takes them far away from home and puts them in conditions that are not good for a child."

"The girls who scale the fish for other vendors also do a very dangerous job because they are easily injured. The women who sell fish don't know what the rights of the children are. They need to get sensitized and informed so that they can understand and treat them better."

"Companies that manufacture cigarettes should also do all they can to prevent children in the neighborhood from buying these cigarettes."

(Boy), 16 years old

"I am here today to learn more about rights and how to apply. There is a big plant that produces cement and has many risks for both the environment and people's health. When producing cement, the smoke that comes out of the factory stacks creates air contamination. People breathe the air which can cause bronchitis, asthma and other respiratory diseases. That's the reason why I think it is negative. Children do not know this danger. They often breathe this contaminated air without worrying about the risk and can get sick. For me, it is necessary to reduce the level of contamination. We should go to the big meetings such as in Copenhagen and speak out. But here in Senegal, we could also talk to the management of the cement company and ask them to reduce the contamination."

"There are also small shops that sell alcohol to children. This is not a problem for adults but it is a problem for children. Some are buying. This can lead to mental problems, on their brains. We should not allow the sale of alcohol close to certain places where children can be found such as schools. Of course alcohol is not sold inside the school but the kids will buy it in stores nearby and consume it at school. There are many children who do this in my neighborhood. They buy small plastic bags of alcohol that cost only 100, 200 or 300 CFA francs. 100 CFA francs (0.15 euros) is nothing. Any child can have 100 francs CFA and buy alcohol. For me, these shops should be closed because it's not good for children. But the companies that produce milk, toys, clothes, that's good."

"Many children work in carpentry workshops and breathe wood dust. This can cause problems to their chest. Here in Africa there is not much equipment to protect them. But the place of a child is in school and not in the street. A child must learn many things and obtain many degrees. Those who miss classes are likely become thieves. If one day they lack money, they may steal to get more. Those who don't go to school are only interested in earning a lot of money. What can be done is to keep a close eye on children and 'see' what kind of work they really do in the shop and workshops. No company should be allowed to exploit a child like an animal."

(Girl), 15 years old

"I know a factory producing processed food and products from fish. The children who work there unload, put fish in crates, package and transport them to the cars. But there are many dangers for them. The noise is too strong for them and the machines operate with electricity."

"I feel bad when I see these children work. What they should be doing is to learn a job. That's what I'm doing in my group of children and youth. I am learning how to sew. This is also true that the sewing machine may also be hazardous to children. You can prick you finger with the needle at any time so you really have to understand the machine and how it works."

"But the plant processing fish also has some advantages. For example, people living nearby can buy fresh fish at a good price. It is advantageous for them. The workers who work in the factory can bring some fish back home, which means they spend less for their daily food. This is also the reason why the company shouldn't close its doors. If it gets closed, people who work there will face economic hardship."

"What we could do is to get the children out of the factory and teach them a job. For those who are still young, we should bring them back to school. For those who are too old, we can teach them a job. But a job that is not harmful to their health such as sewing and hairdressing. There are also opportunities to work as domestic helpers but it can also cause other problems for children such as assault and rape, so this may not be the best option. I have heard stories like that. A friend of mine worked as domestic helper for a rich man. Her boss harassed and raped her. The boss' wife called her a liar and fired her. Nobody trusted her. So practically, she lost everything."

"If children are already in the business, what can be done is to make sure their jobs are suitable for their age and strength. This is the first rule their employers should follow. They should also listen to the children who work in the company and allow them to give their views on how to ensure their own safety at work. It's ok to remove these children from work as long as you can offer them something else ---either training or work. But if the children have nothing else to do, we must give them the opportunity to work but always make sure this kind of work suits them."

(Boy), 14 years old

"Today we learned things I did not know. There are special rights for us. And as a child I can claim them and put them forward."

"I am in a Koranic school. When I was very young, I started learning the Quran and begging in the streets too."

"There are shops that are good for children. Before I myself went to a kind of farm where there were lots of chicken and roosters. After 9 o'clock, after begging in the street, I used to go to the farm to look after the chickens and give them food. At the end of the month, I received 3,000 CFA francs as payment. With this work, I was able to manage by my own and buy my food."

"I know another child talibé (*child studying and living in a Koranic school*) who worked for woman in a small shop. Every day he came, worked and then returned to the Koranic school after some time. He even was given the key of the place where the money was locked. I think it is very good."

"But children are sometimes treated as if they are thieves. We try to explain we don't steal money but adults don't listen to children. They do not believe us. So we sometimes have to leave the work behind. If I see a child who is abused at work, I'll try to talk to the boss. But if he does not listen, I often feel there is little I can do."

"But there are rules that the "boss" should follow when dealing with children. For example, it is necessary that the child gets enough food, sleep well and not be abused. We must also respect their right to leisure. This is important. If a ball and some jerseys are distributed, children can play football. A child should have fun from time to time -- even if working. A grown-up does not need to play --but a child yes."

(girl), 16 years old

"I came here today to learn more about children's rights and discuss how to better protect children."

"In my neighborhood, there is a factory that produces some fish broth powder. The company has two aspects, one positive and one negative. First the broth powder is made from trash that is harmful to health. This is very bad for the health of those working there."

"Aside from the bad smell, the chemicals they use to produce the fish broth aren't good for the health of the people who cook and eat it --especially for children who are weaker than adults. But what is positive is that breadwinners who work in this plant can feed their families."

"I also know a lumber and carpentry company that employs children. What is positive is that they are learning a job that will be useful for them later in their lives. But the downside of it is that they work without gloves or goggles. They inhale all day long wood dust and no measures are taken to protect them."

"One of the rules should be to educate people in general and the "bosses" in particular. The first rule is that children should wear gloves and goggles in order to protect their health. Besides, the company can arrange activities for people such as distributing medicines or holding free medical visits in the neighborhood. If I look at my experience as child worker, I think that providing a child with a job that is suitable for its age and strength is good. But the opposite is bad."

"There is a factory that pours ammonia into the environment near the place I live. The management of this company should agree to assess its impact on the rights of the children from the neighborhood. We can ask them to take our rights more seriously. If they refuse to change, the State should force the company to close down."

(boy), 16 years old

"I am in a Koranic school. Some of my rights have been respected, but others do not. In the evening I go to bed in a place that is comfortable. And when I'm sick, people bring me to the doctor. This is ok. But my rights to stay home and learn in my area have not been fulfilled."

"I know a place where fruits come from everywhere to be unloaded and then sold in Dakar every day. At this big market area, some children work and transport fruits on their head. It's really hard work. They arrive in the morning and wait for customers to commission them to transport goods. The fare is about 100 CFA francs depending on the load. This is not good because it's too heavy and it's hot. This has a negative impact on their health. They may have different problems, diseases such as diarrhea, malaria."

"The good news is that those children who work have money they can bring back home. But it would be better for these children to learn something ---either French, Arabic or a job. There, on the market, children learn nothing. This type of work should not be given to children. Machines or cars can do that. No children. There are "lighter" types of work that children could do. But what they are currently doing at the moment is just too heavy."

"There are also children who are carters and illegally fetch sand from the sea to be sold to make cement. It is not good for them because they are often hunted and arrested by the police. Extracting sand from the shore should be prohibited because the sea moves forward. So the activity itself is also bad for the environment. What is needed is to ask these carters to transport another commodity and allow them to earn money otherwise through another activity."