About Global Child Forum

Global Child Forum is an independent, global multi-stakeholder platform for informed dialogue and thought leadership on how to advance children’s rights in support of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Global Child Forum aims at gathering leaders from business, governments, academia and civil society in a joint effort to implement children’s rights.

The unique role of Global Child Forum is built on three pillars:

• An annual global leaders Forum in Stockholm and regional satellite Forums in another part of the world;
• Essential fact finding through analysis and research on children’s rights;
• An interactive website, a hub interlinking information sources, activities and stakeholders around the world.

Together with our network of partners, expert council and academic networks we aim to be a catalyst for global cross-sector dialogue and multi-stakeholder action on children’s rights.
Introduction

Almost one third of the world’s population is under 18 and businesses have a vast impact on their lives. But while the business and human rights agenda has evolved significantly in recent years, the children’s rights perspective has only recently started to be addressed.

When companies are asked about what they see as most important in terms of children’s rights the overwhelming majority mention child labour, while in reality the problem is broader and more complex.

The Global study was conducted in 2013 and based on interviews and surveys with around 400 CEOs and heads of Corporate Social Responsibility, representing 63 countries and more than 20 industries of various sizes.

What do CEOs know about children’s rights?

The Global CEO study (see page 4) shows that the knowledge about children’s rights is low among Chief Executive Officers. Of all respondents, 26 per cent have good knowledge about the Children’s Rights and Business Principles.

Of the six major sustainability areas (children’s rights, labour standards, community engagement, corruption, human rights, environment) children’s rights are given the lowest priority by most CEOs. Despite this, respondents claim they are addressing children’s rights in at least one way. The most common way to do this is part of Corporate Social Responsibility policy, often in form of local charity projects. On the other hand, few take direct actions related to the company’s core business.

Although, many companies would like to do more, the problem is that they lack knowledge and awareness of what to do.

As the study shows, many companies are ready to act and accept a shared responsibility with governments, but are unaware or unsure of how to proceed. They are also calling for stronger State regulations and guidelines. In fact, 73 per cent of those interviewed would encourage more extensive legislation, even if it increases operational costs.
METHODOLOGY

63 COUNTRIES

GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE OF BUSINESS

GLOBAL 50%

400 CEOs

TYPE OF BUSINESS (MORE THAN 20 INDUSTRIES)

SERVICE COMPANY 50%

MANUFACTURING COMPANY 22%

FINANCIAL/TRADE COMPANY 28%

SIZE OF BUSINESS

LARGE 38%

MEDIUM 35%

SMALL 27%

Large >1 B USD, Medium 10 M USD to 1 B USD, Small <10 M USD
How are companies addressing children’s rights?

Few companies see human rights, and in particular children’s rights, as part of their core business. Often, it is the “do no harm” thinking that prevails.

Many service companies do not see what role they can play in addressing children’s rights.

The majority of CEOs struggle to see the economic impact of child right’s efforts, but those 34 percent who do can clearly see how a stronger commitment could add business value. It could, for example, boost interest in the company, and help to gain new customers and increase brand value.

Companies with knowledge of children’s rights are also more ready to take action. Thus, increased awareness will in turn lead to getting more done – something which in turn could increase opportunities even further.

What stimulates and encourages?

How do we provide knowledge and inspiration to companies that have yet to engage, or those who are on the brink of engagement? Owners and board members are the most important when it comes to influencing companies.

Many companies’ calls for best practice examples and guidance, they need help from those with experience of children’s rights and business in practice.

Today, few CEOs see children’s rights as a part of their core business. But there are examples of companies that have been proactive in considering children’s rights. Those companies have a few things in common: they understand the full scope of how their business affect children, they understand that addressing children’s rights can have a positive impact on competitiveness, in the recruiting market and among employees. Some companies put children as stakeholders of business and take the child’s perspective into account when making important business decisions.
KEY FINDINGS

26% have good knowledge about the children’s rights and business principles.

90% of the respondents claim they are addressing children’s rights in at least one way, but few take actions.

16% claim to have in-house resources dedicated to children’s rights.

Of the six major sustainability areas, children’s rights are given the lowest priority.
56% believe that governments are responsible for children’s rights.

73% would encourage more extensive legislation even if it increases their operational cost.

60% are ready to increase efforts but 70% ask for best practice examples and guidelines.

The respondents say owners and board members are the most important influencers.