



United Nations
Global Compact



Save the Children

I. OVERVIEW

The Children's Rights and Business Principles (CRBPs) Asia Regional Event in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 6 October 2015 marked the third anniversary of the CRBPs initiative, launched by UNICEF, UN Global Compact and Save the Children in March 2012. Building on a number of national releases of the CRBPs in Asia, this event took stock of achievements and showcased how companies have used the CRBPs to advance efforts to respect and support children's rights, and identified areas for improvement.

Welcoming Remarks from CRBP Partners

- **Mr. Mohd. Shah bin Hashim**, President, Global Compact Network Malaysia, addressed the history of the CRBPs and the success they have found within the region through national releases. He encouraged businesses to continue engagement through the CRBP-dedicated [website](#), which includes resources and webinars that provide company guidance on implementation.
- **Mr. Andrew Mawson**, Chief of Children's Rights and Business, UNICEF, emphasized the importance of business engagement as a component of the United Nations' Agenda 2030 and the adoption of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). He introduced the two session topics for the event, and described UNICEF's work in the region with businesses and governments to promote child's rights, including travel and tourism, manufacturing supply chains in the garment sector and child online protection.
- **Ms. Charlotta Sterky**, Deputy Secretary General and Director of Child Rights & Business, Save the Children Sweden, focused on how the rapid economic expansion in Asia has contributed to the critical importance of attention to child's rights in the region, highlighting work in China by the Center for Child Rights and Corporate Social Responsibility (CCR CSR) as a model for rapid expansion of training programmes throughout the region. She emphasized the critical role of partnerships for knowledge gathering and support in making support for child rights a long-term strategic move for the private sector.

Keynote Address

- **Mr. Thomas Thomas**, CEO, ASEAN CSR Network, emphasized the long history of abuses perpetuated against children, noting that even today, where progress has been made towards articulating robust expectations for child rights, mammoth gaps persist between those expectations and the application and implementation that are necessary to actually protect children. Mr. Thomas identified the position of child rights within the greater Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) framework, recalling that business has a responsibility, as a member of society, to contribute to society's well-being, and that child rights, as a distinct facet of human rights, must be addressed when it is relevant to the business. He highlighted the role of the CRBPs in advising businesses on practices that respect child rights. With respect to countries in the ASEAN network, Mr. Thomas noted that countries had made important strides towards enacting strong human rights laws that protect children, but that the gap in enforcement highlighted the critical need for transparency, monitoring capacity, and enforcement commitments to realize the potential of such laws. The ASEAN CSR Network actively works towards an inclusive, sustainable ASEAN community that recognizes the unique importance of child rights as part of the long-term partnership of the private and public sector towards sustainability. As part of this movement, Mr. Thomas noted that businesses must work with peers, civil society and the public sector to secure a new environment that supports child rights, not just as part of the moral imperative communicated in the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, but as an aspect of

good business practice, risk management and an investment in recruitment for the future work force. Through such partnerships, we can overcome the lack of voice and functional invisibility that 1.1 billion children endure in today's society.

II. SESSION 1 - URBANIZATION & MIGRANT WORKERS

Moderator: Ms. Veronica Pedrosa, Independent Journalist and Presenter

Panellists:

- Mr. Brendan Barrett, Research Coordinator, Global Compact Cities Programme
- Ms. Paniti Chantayasakorn, Senior Corporate Manager and Head of CSR, Sansiri
- Ms. Ines Kaempfer, Executive Director, CCR CSR China & Hong Kong
- Mr. Bruce Klafter, Vice-President Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility, Flextronics

The first panel discussion focused on the challenges and opportunities that urbanization and migrant workers create with respect to child rights. In Asia, one of the most rapidly urbanizing continents, 40% of the population lives in cities, and that percentage is increasing at an accelerating rate, with a significantly higher than average portion of the urban population being youth. While migration to the cities is typically spurred by the promise of employment and opportunity, in many of Asia's rapidly developing cities, youth are faced with extreme poverty, poor sanitation, pollution, and are left without access to critical services. Mr. Barrett addressed how the smaller cities face more burdensome challenges to coping with urban migration, as they often lack the expertise to deal with the health, education and other infrastructural issues needed to support child rights. The Global Compact Cities Programme puts cities in touch with the private sector to share expertise and build partnerships and capacity to deal with the issues of rapid urbanization.

Issues related to migration and migrant workers were also addressed. Ms. Kaempfer and CCR CSR focused on the challenges of children left behind by migrant worker parents, especially within China. She noted the large gap in psychological development that is created by depriving a child of parental care and highlighted CCR CSR's work in keeping families together and supporting young workers in a way that recognizes the unique challenges that youth face in the workforce. Mr. Klafter and Ms. Chantayasakorn addressed the issue of migrant workers from the perspective of businesses that depend on migrant workers as a significant portion of the workforce. Mr. Klafter commented on how Flextronics has partnered with civil society to find solutions that keep children in environments outside of the factory complexes where they can have their basic necessities met, like food, health and education, but continue to support parental needs by investing in summer camps that allow parental bonding time with children. Ms. Chantayasakorn highlighted the challenges that faced Sansiri in providing education in Thailand for migrant youth from Cambodia and Myanmar, noting that even when education was offered, it was eschewed because of the language barrier. Sansiri created a programme that would support child-friendly spaces and work with migrant-worker contractors to ensure that those young migrant workers who are brought into Sansiri's community are able to be supported by the educational support provided. Ms. Chantayasakorn emphasized that this is still a work in progress, reiterating the importance of continued dialogue with contractors, civil society and parents to measure the success of the programme.

Ultimately, this session elicited a multitude of perspectives on how to address the crucial issues of urbanization and migration with respect to child rights. Ms. Kaempfer emphasized the need to look

outside the box for solutions, noting that supporting children’s education and mental wellness in urban environments could be fostered through such ways as encouraging sport. The overriding message was the importance of finding the right partners to support businesses in developing supportive programmes for children, whether it be through partnering with local governments as enabled by the Global Compact Cities Programme, or with civil society to consult on programmes, like Sansiri’s and Flextronics’ programmes, or to collect knowledge on best practices.

III. SESSION 2 - PROVIDING DECENT WORK FOR YOUNG WORKERS, PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Moderator: Ms. Veronica Pedrosa, Independent Journalist and Presenter

Panellists:

- Mr. Zahidal Hassan, Communications and Partnership Officer, UNICEF Bangladesh
- Mr. Chee Keong Lai, Senior Director – Risk Assessments and Audits, Electronics Industry Citizenship Coalition (EICC)
- Mr. Lake Law, CSR Manager, Concord Pottery Ltd
- Mr. Greg Priest, Head of Sustainability Policy, IKEA

The second panel focused on Principle 3 of the CRBPs, namely calling on businesses to provide decent work for young workers, parents and caregivers. With youth unemployment in Asia at a relatively low percentage, businesses must be sensitive to the insecurity, low wages, poor working conditions, and lack of social protection that often characterizes youth employment. Mr. Chee Keong discussed the unique challenges of young workers, noting that in China, EICC has undertaken research that shows the positive effects that monitoring of internships can have on reducing drop-out rates of students and improving the quality of the work experience.

Additionally, panellists discussed that for parents and caregivers, issues of breastfeeding, child care, maternity and paternity rights, and work-life balance are of crucial importance to securing the rights of workers’ children. Mr. Hassan discussed UNICEF Bangladesh’s activism in securing breastfeeding rights for garment workers in that country. By providing lactation kits and breastfeeding spaces, garment factories were able to see a notable decrease in the turnover rates of employees. Mr. Law also echoed the market benefits of supporting parents’ needs in their employment. Noting that a majority of workers in Concord Pottery’s factories were immigrants with families, Concord was able to provide childcare centres on-site and facilitated children and youth access to health-care and education. Such support for workers with families decreased the turnover rate significantly enough to make up for the costs of the programmes themselves.

Multiple speakers spoke of the need for a top-down approach. Mr. Law identified that executive buy-in was fundamental to getting Concord Pottery’s programme off the ground. Mr. Brendan Li, CEO of Concord Pottery spoke to the business benefits that played into his motivation to throw his full support behind the programme. Likewise, Mr. Priest emphasized the importance of seeing child rights issues as opportunities, rather than challenges, to a business. For IKEA, looking for innovative ways to confront issues that affect children offers opportunities for long-term relationship-building between management and workers.

IV. SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

- **Mr. Thomas Thomas** offered a reflection on the day's discussion, noting that there is clear evidence of companies choosing to respect and support child rights. He noted with optimism that companies are proactively engaging with civil society to make improvements without waiting for the public to call for it. In this vein, Mr. Thomas offered a perspective that the business case for child rights should not just be about added value and money to the company, but be about creating long-term sustainable business practices that focus on the best interests of children. He emphasized that ultimately, philanthropy, i.e. how a company spends its money, is not enough; but rather, corporate social responsibility must be rooted in how a company makes its money.
- **Ms. Charlotta Sterky** offered Closing Remarks for Save the Children, noting the importance of collaboration with the business sector in avoiding the catastrophic costs of inaction on child rights issues.
- **Ms. Wivina Belmonte**, UNICEF Representative to Malaysia, echoed this collaborative approach, identifying child rights as a shared, collective issue.