

SIDE EVENT

Co-organised by UNICEF and
Business & Human Rights Resource Centre

"Children's rights & business"

Tuesday 14 June 2011 - during the United Nations Human Rights Council session

Palais des Nations (United Nations Geneva), Room XXVII



www.business-humanrights.org

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre

Comments by Ulf Karlberg

Co-Chair, Business & Human Rights Resource Centre

[founding Chair of the Amnesty International Swedish Section Business Group;
former senior executive with Astra Pharmaceuticals (now AstraZeneca)]

Today Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, the non-profit organization I have co-chaired for 10 years, is delighted to launch a new global information portal on Business and Children. First I will say a few words about the Resource Centre and then introduce the portal itself.

The Resource Centre works to bring local facts and news about business and human rights to a global audience. We also provide guidance tools for everyone working in this field. We take a fair and balanced approach: highlighting positive steps that companies are taking, to encourage others to follow suit, and drawing attention to alleged abuses by companies, to increase exposure and accountability. When civil society raises concerns about a company's conduct we invite the company to put forward its response, for posting alongside the allegation – this response process can help lead to positive immediate change on the ground. This is a new and effective kind of “interactive on-line engagement”.

The website covers over 5000 companies and every country, is updated hourly, and receives 1.5 million hits per month. The site, our 6 portals, and our Weekly Updates are free of charge.

The new portal launched today is focussed entirely on business and children.

[SLIDE ONE]:
Here you can see the portal's homepage – which can be accessed via the “Business & Children” button on our website homepage:
www.business-humanrights.org

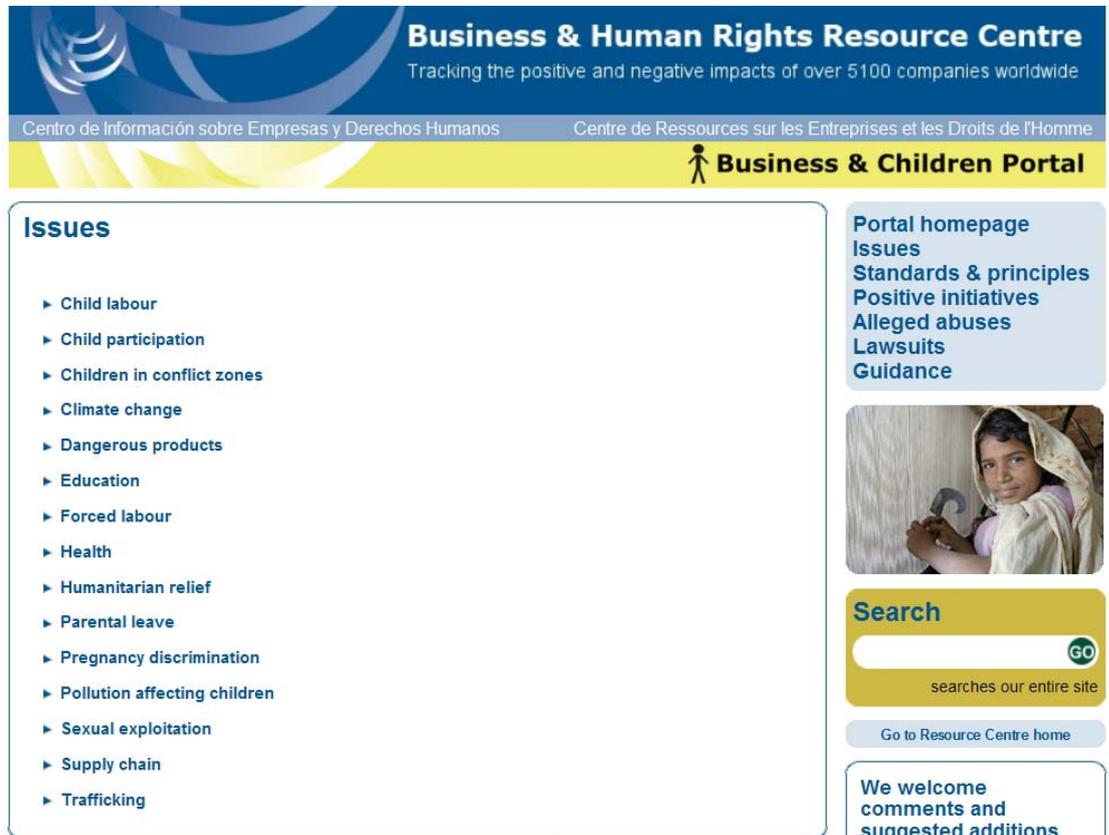
Business & Human Rights Resource Centre
Tracking the positive and negative impacts of over 5100 companies worldwide

Centro de Información sobre Empresas y Derechos Humanos Centre de Ressources sur les Entreprises et les Droits de l'Homme

Business & Children Portal

- About this portal**
- Children's Rights & Business Principles Initiative (UNICEF, UN Global Compact, Save the Children)**
- Issues**
 - child labour, health, pollution, trafficking etc
 - International standards & principles**
 - Positive initiatives**
 - Alleged abuses**
 - Lawsuits**
 - Practical guidance**
- Latest additions**
- Featured item**
Online consultation: Children's Rights & Business Principles
UNICEF, UN Global Compact and Save the Children are conducting a consultation on draft "Children's Rights & Business Principles".
Deadline for feedback: 30 June
- News on business & children**
 - ILO report released on the World Day Against Child Labour calls for urgent action against hazardous forms of child labour
 - Walt Disney, Ericsson, Hennes & Mauritz, Intel, Motorola, Anglo American, Phillips-Van Heusen, Gildan Activewear & Xstrata get top mark on child labour risk disclosure
 - Protesters in New York City say Hershey has broken vow to eliminate child labour in its cocoa supply chain in W. Africa - company responds
 - Maternity leave will kill your career, recruitment companies warn women [Australia]
 - More
- Directory of organizations working on children's rights**
- Search**

[SLIDE TWO]: To give you a sense of the portal, here is the navigation page for the issues covered.



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Issues

- ▶ Child labour
- ▶ Child participation
- ▶ Children in conflict zones
- ▶ Climate change
- ▶ Dangerous products
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Forced labour
- ▶ Health
- ▶ Humanitarian relief
- ▶ Parental leave
- ▶ Pregnancy discrimination
- ▶ Pollution affecting children
- ▶ Sexual exploitation
- ▶ Supply chain
- ▶ Trafficking

Portal homepage
Issues
Standards & principles
Positive initiatives
Alleged abuses
Lawsuits
Guidance

Search

 GO
searches our entire site

[Go to Resource Centre home](#)

We welcome comments and suggested additions

[SLIDE THREE]: And here is the introductory page for one of the issues, “forced labour” relating to children.



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Business & Children Portal

Issues > Forced labour

The internationally recognised definition of forced labour is “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily” (ILO Convention no. 29). The penalty does not have to be physical punishment or constraint – it can take other forms such as denial of pay, benefits or rest periods, or the threat of dismissal.

Child labour performed under particularly exploitative, abusive or dangerous conditions qualifies as forced labour under international law. Some human rights groups argue that all child labour is forced labour, because children are too young to have the capacity to consent to work. Others maintain that children can consent to some types of work.

Debt bondage (or bonded labour) is a form of forced labour. It is often referred to as a modern form of slavery. It exists when workers are forced to work in order to pay off their own or someone else’s debts. Children can be caught in bonded labour when their parents or other adults offer the services of the child as repayment for a debt.

- ▶ International standards
- ▶ Key initiatives & reports
- ▶ Case examples

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We welcome comments and

There is excellent work being done on business & children issues in all regions, and also at the international level as you have heard from my fellow panellists today. But until now, information about business & children’s rights has not been easily accessible in a central hub; such a tool has not existed. This new portal brings it all together in one place, to increase its impact and to reach a global audience of people who can and should make a difference.

First and foremost, we hope that the portal leads to greater awareness of, and action on, business and children's rights by all sectors. We hope that children themselves will use the portal to learn about the role of companies and get involved.

We hope that NGOs in all regions will use it to get the word out about their concerns, and for their research and campaigns.

Companies will be able to come to the portal to find examples of good practice that they can draw from, initiatives that they can join, and guidelines they can follow. Companies can also see examples of the heavy human, financial and reputational costs associated with abuses.

Investors, analysts, pension funds, financial institutions and the financial media can use the portal to identify risks firms face and what questions they should be asking.

Last but certainly not least, we hope that the portal makes a useful contribution to the important initiatives represented here in this room: by providing a prominent platform for you, and also a regularly updated source of cases from around the world that you can draw on.

We intend for the portal to be an active information hub. We welcome individuals, organizations and companies working on children's issues to send us cases and reports to include.

Finally, the portal will help ensure that when it comes to children's rights, no company, financial institution, government or international organization will in the future be able to say "we did not know". Thank you very much.