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Press Release

“Businesses in Myanmar should ask themselves how they impact children’s rights”

MCRB has launched a Briefing Paper on ‘Children Rights and Business in Myanmar’. The Paper focusses on the role of business in respecting and supporting children’s rights. It aims to provide guidance to foreign and Myanmar companies on what children’s rights mean in the context of doing business in Myanmar.

The Briefing Paper uses the framework of the ten ‘Children’s Rights and Business Principles (CRBP)’, developed by UNICEF, the UN Global Compact and Save the Children (see Background). MCRB has put these into a Myanmar context, including an analysis of relevant Myanmar laws as well as international standards.

Launching the paper, Vicky Bowman, Director, MCRB, said:

‘In our experience, businesses in Myanmar rarely ask themselves what impacts they have on children, even though 24% of Myanmar’s population is under 18. We see occasional public discussion of illegal child labour, particularly in garment factories, although it is just as prevalent in teashops, orchards, artisanal mines and several other sectors’.

‘But there are many other ways that business should think about whether they are respecting the rights of children. Children are consumers, community members, workers – including in the value chain - and family members of workers.

‘Companies should take a look at their business and ask themselves: is this sugary snack promoting obesity and undermining the child’s right to health? Can my factory support mothers in caring for their children with a workplace nursery? Do the visits my tourism company offers to monastic schools interfere with the children’s right to privacy or even put them at risk of sexual abuse? Could I use my TV programme to raise awareness of what children should do to avoid being bullied online? Can I provide more young workers over 14 with a safe and quality job?’

She continued:

‘Myanmar’s new Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process requires assessment of social impacts. Social impacts which include impacts on children. For example, a fence can block a path to school. A mine can bring in migrant labour, with more children than local schools can absorb. A factory brings fast delivery trucks onto a road where children play.

Since a project may affect children differently to adults, the voices of children need to be heard when companies and EIA consultants assess social impacts of projects. Otherwise the rights of the children will be forgotten’.

In compiling the recommendations in the paper, MCRB held a consultation attended by foreign and Myanmar businesses, child rights experts, NGOs working with children, and UN agencies. The paper is accompanied by a list of relevant ‘linked initiatives’ concerning children’s rights and business which are being undertaken by other organisations in Myanmar.

Background

1. This Briefing Paper is part of a series on cross cutting issues published by MCRB which is targeted at recommendations for businesses. Others include ‘Indigenous People’s Rights and Business in Myanmar’, and ‘Land’. The next paper will be on ‘Discrimination and Business’. MCRB has also address impacts on children in its sector-wide impact assessments (SWIAs) on Oil and Gas, Tourism, ICT and Mining. The Briefing Paper draws on the research findings of the SWIAs.
2. The Children’s Rights and Business Principles (CRBP) developed by UNICEF, UNGC Global Compact and Save the Children (childrenandbusiness.org) are:
 1. Respecting Children’s Rights
 2. Child Labour
 3. Young Workers, Parents and Caregivers
 4. Protection And Safety of Children in Business Activities and Facilities
 5. Safe Products and Services
 6. Respecting Children’s Rights in Marketing and Advertising
 7. Children and the Environment and Land
 8. Security Arrangements
 9. Children Affected by Emergencies
 10. Reinforcing Community and Government Efforts
3. Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB) www.mcrb.org.mm is a Yangon-based initiative funded by the UK, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Ireland, based on a collaboration between the UK-based Institute for Human Rights and Business, and the Danish Institute for Human Rights. The Centre was established in 2013 to provide an effective and legitimate platform for the creation of knowledge, capacity and dialogue concerning responsible business in Myanmar, based on local needs and international standards, which results in more responsible business practices. It is a neutral platform working with business, civil society and government.