



**UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE**

GENEVA SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS
AND MANAGEMENT

GENEVA CENTER
FOR **BUSINESS**
& **HUMAN**
RIGHTS



**UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE**

CENTRE FOR CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS STUDIES

Addressing Children's Rights in Business – An Assessment from Switzerland and Liechtenstein

Project team: Dr. Berit Knaak, Pascale Chavaz, Serra Cremer Iyi, Simon Nehme

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Guidance: Prof. Dorothée Baumann-Pauly, Prof. Karl Hanson, Dr. Roberta Ruggiero

Launch event, 31 August 2022



Research objectives

1. What is the current **understanding** of business and children's rights in corporate practice?
2. What **activities** do companies undertake in connection with children's rights?
3. What are the **challenges** companies are facing when realizing children's rights and what are the **opportunities** to advance children's rights in the value chain?



Methodology

Analytical Framework

- Children's Rights and Business Principles (CRBPs)
- International children's rights treaties and conventions
- Expert academic literature



Upstream



Midstream



Downstream

Empirical research

over 100 companies (all major industries represented, 20% of them SMEs)



Desk research: 60 companies



Online survey: 54 valid responses



Interviews: 15 in-depth interviews

Written report





Key insight # 1: Engagement

Most companies do not engage specifically with children's rights
but are generally committed to human rights.



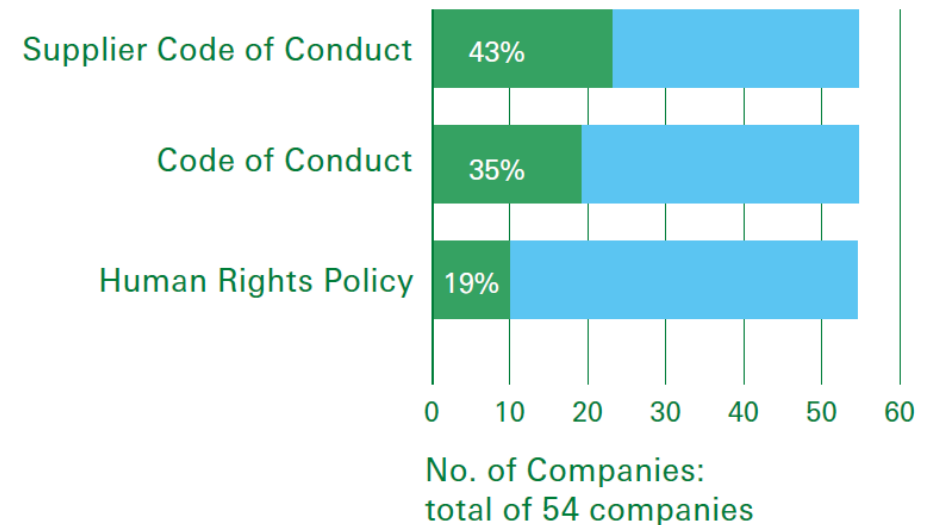
1

Engagement: Most companies do not engage specifically with children's rights but are generally committed to human rights.

Relevance for children's rights:

- Perceived relevance **depends in part on the industry, product or service** (e.g., B2B, B2C) – but some aspects are universal (e.g., apprenticeships, family-friendly policies, or environmental impact)
- Companies set environmental goals or manage product safety, but **rarely make the connection to children's rights**
- **Relevance upstream > relevance downstream**

Graph 7: Reference to children's rights in corporate policies





Key insight # 2: Awareness and policies

Companies' awareness of children's rights goes beyond child labor, however, in corporate policies, children's rights are mostly reduced to child labor in the value chain.

2

Awareness and policies: Companies' awareness of children's rights goes beyond child labor, however, in corporate policies, children's rights are mostly reduced to child labor in the value chain.

- Policies at the **company level**: tend to follow concrete legal requirements
- Policies **for suppliers**: rely more on aspirational objectives and global frameworks



“ A zero-tolerance policy on child labor is the sine qua non condition for supplier selection.

Policies are only a piece of paper but are the starting point to raise awareness and build capacity.

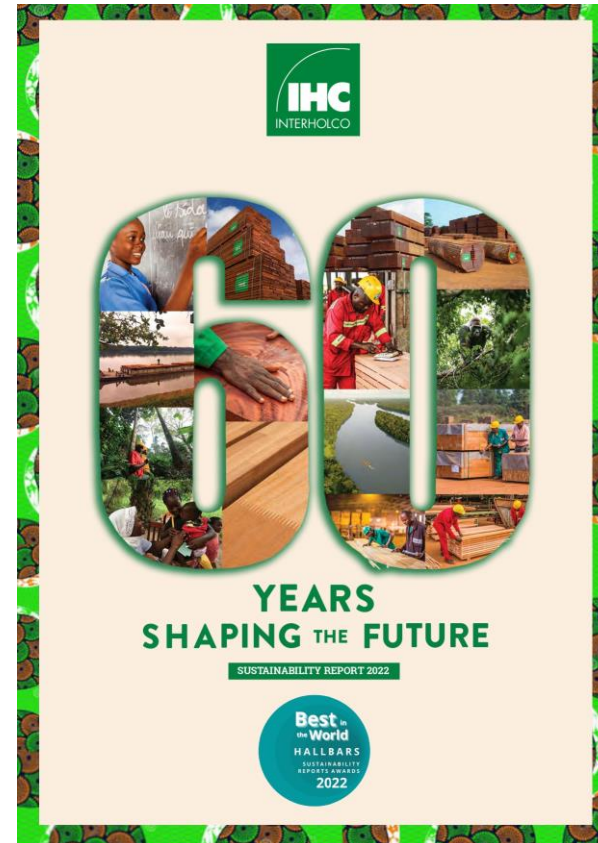
We realized that the challenges are so big that we will never be able to create impact on our own. ”

A corporate perspective: Upstream value chain

Tullia Baldassarri

Communication and Marketing

Interholco Group



Key insight # 3: Priorities

Companies prioritize three children's rights and business principles:
1) elimination of child labor, 2) product safety, and 3) safety of children on-site and in business facilities. Overall, companies have limited awareness of the full range of children's rights in business.

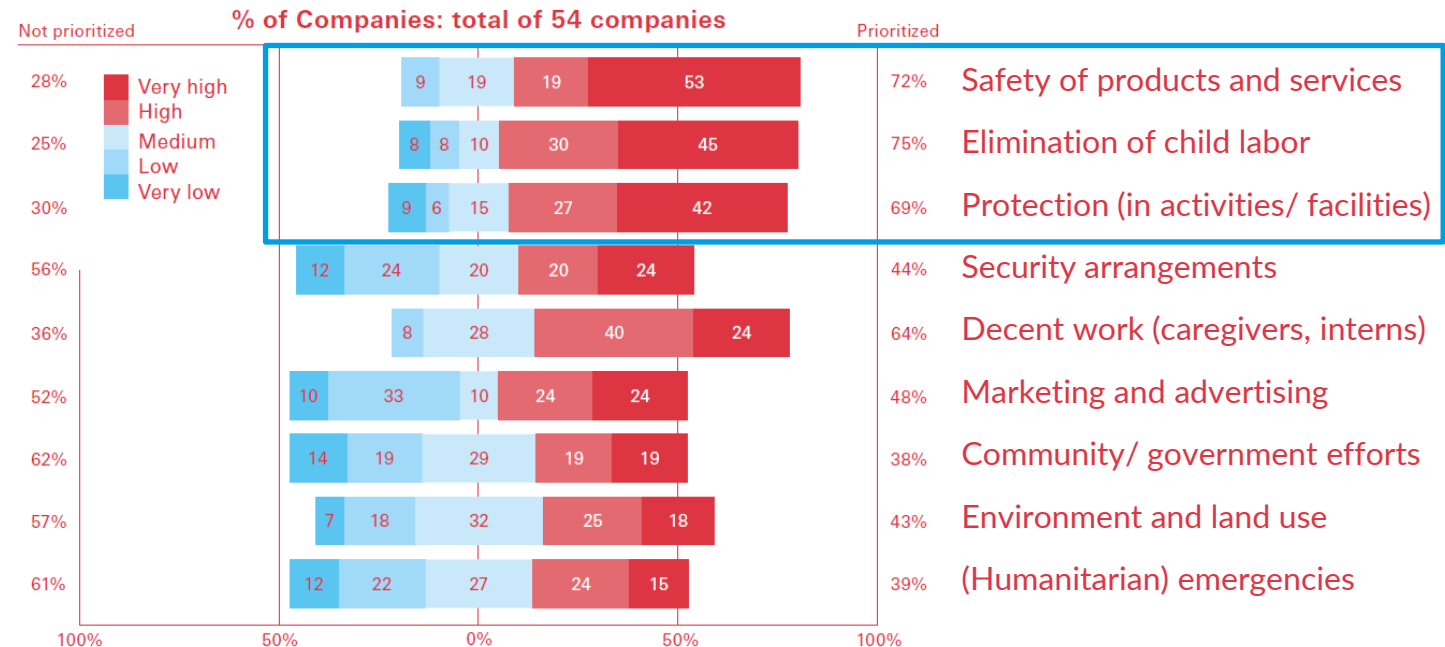
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Priorities: Companies prioritize three children's rights and business principles: 1) elimination of child labor, 2) product safety, and 3) safety of children on-site and in business facilities. Overall, companies have limited awareness of the full range of children's rights in business.

“

Product safety is a more *tangible aspect*, so companies address it more. Other aspects in our value chain are less relatable – incl. child labor risks at subcontractors or manufacturing sites. Companies often consider child labor in their value chain as unlikely even though they have no data. *This is something that companies need to work on – not to turn a blind eye.*”

Graph 11: Priority of children's rights areas for companies' own operations



For the upstream supply chain, companies report the same top three priorities.

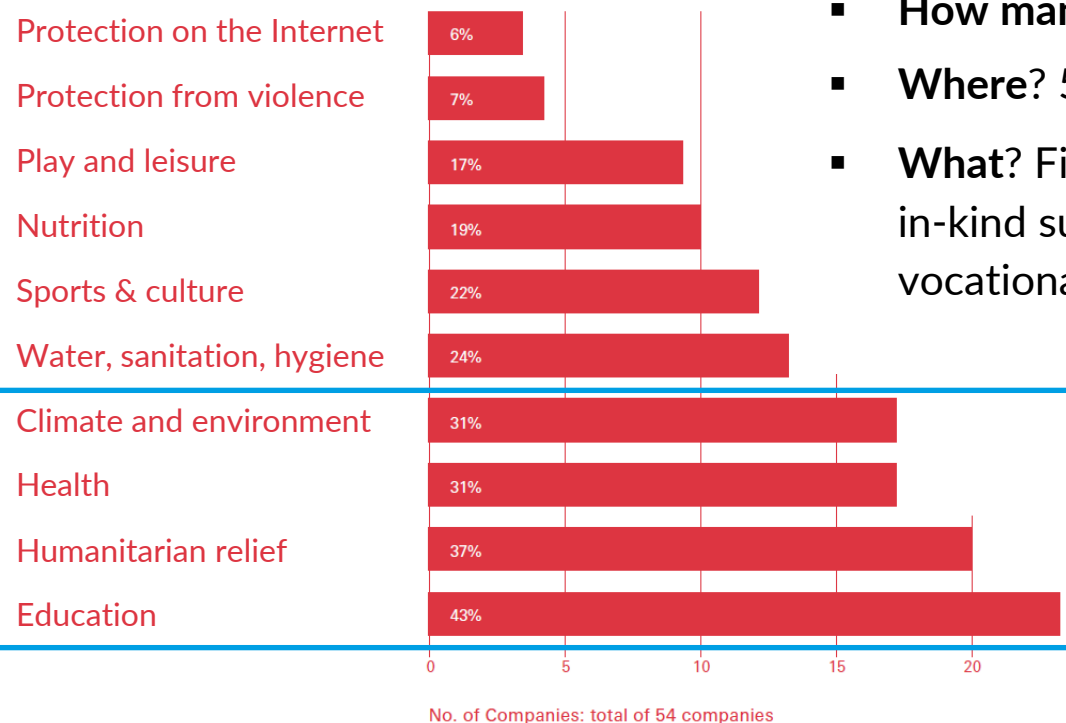
Key insight # 4: Philanthropy

Most corporate activities in relation to children are philanthropic in nature. These activities focus mostly on providing for children (e.g., education or healthcare), and less on the protection and participation of children.

4

Philanthropy: Most corporate activities in relation to children are philanthropic in nature. These activities focus mostly on providing for children (e.g., education or healthcare), and less on the protection and participation of children.

Graph 9: Corporate philanthropic activities benefiting children



- **How many?** > 2/3 of companies engage philanthropically
- **Where?** 50% have activities in Switzerland/ Liechtenstein, 60% abroad
- **What?** Financial or material donations, in-kind support (e.g., infrastructure), vocational training and events





Key insight # 5: Management

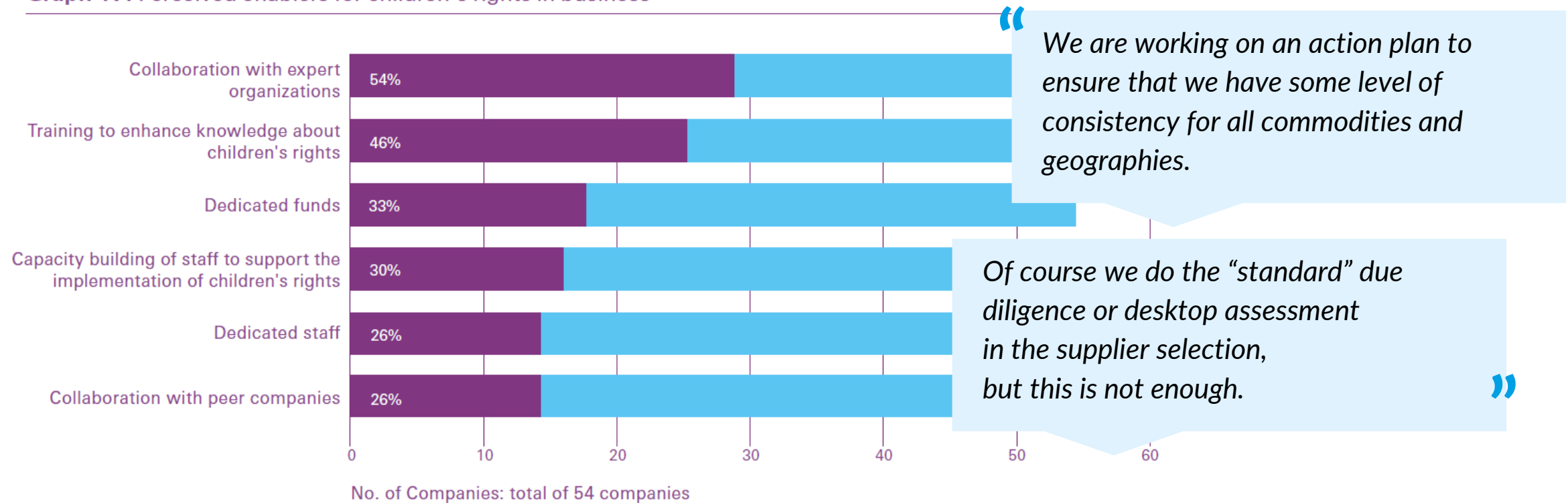
Tools and management systems to implement children's rights in business (e.g., governance, monitoring, remediation) require further development.



5

Management: Tools and management systems to implement children's rights in business (e.g., governance, monitoring, remediation) require further development.

Graph 17: Perceived enablers for children's rights in business




A corporate perspective: Downstream value chain

Erica Fawer

Group Internal Communication
Director and Sustainability
Integration Director

MCI Group



**Our purpose is to bring
people together and
create a positive impact
in our world**

**mci
group**

Shape the future. Share the future.

**mci
group**



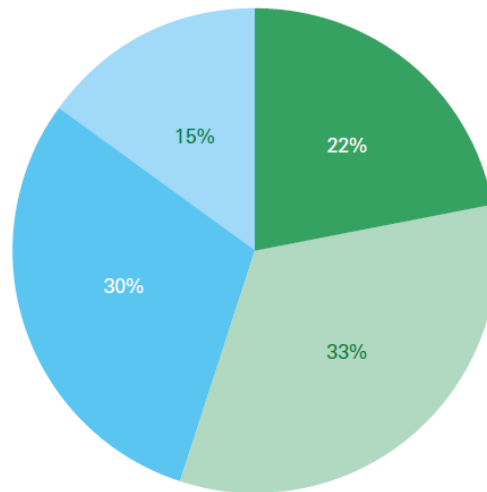
Key insight # 6: Due diligence legislations

Emerging due diligence legislations raise companies' awareness for children's rights and create momentum for children's rights in business.

6 Due diligence legislations: Emerging due diligence legislations raise companies' awareness for children's rights and create momentum for children's rights in business.

Graph 8: Expected increase in relevance of children's rights with mandatory human rights due diligence (mHRDD)

Yes, significantly
Yes, relatively
No
I don't know



total of 54 companies

“It is not enough to say that children's rights are important. You need to *say why and be more specific in your argumentation, discussion, and engagement* – including with legislators, investors, and customers.”

The emerging laws merely demand installing management systems and a risk-based approach, however, reaching those who are in most immediate need also requires adopting *transformative business approaches*.”



Key insights

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Engagement

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2

Awareness and policies

Companies' awareness of children's rights goes beyond child labor. However, in corporate policies, children's rights are mostly reduced to child labor in the value chain.

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Priorities

Companies prioritize three children's rights and business principles: 1) elimination of child labor, 2) product safety, and 3) safety of children on-site and in business facilities. Overall, companies have limited awareness of the full range of children's rights in business.



4

Philanthropy

Most corporate activities in relation to children are philanthropic in nature. These activities focus mostly on providing for children (e.g., education or health-care), and less on the protection and participation of children.

5

Management

Tools and management systems to implement children's rights in business (e.g., governance, monitoring, remediation) require further development.

6

Due diligence legislations

Emerging due diligence legislations raise companies' awareness of children's rights and create momentum for advancing children's rights in business.





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Thank you!

Contact:

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State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO
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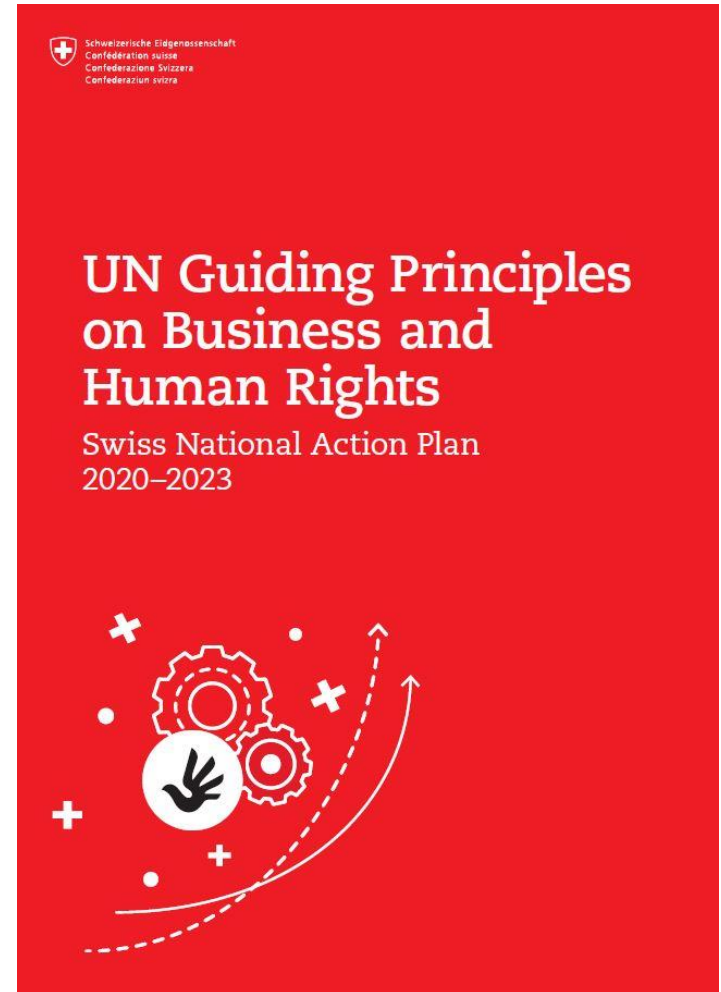
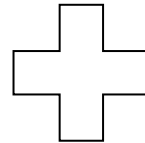
Swiss Business Exchange Group on Child Labour Due Diligence

Myriam Ait Yahia, Focal Point Child Labour, SECO



Context

New Swiss Legislation on Child Labour Due Diligence





Project

- Temporary exchange group for Swiss businesses on the topic of child labour due diligence
- Peer-learning and open discussion on practical questions around the implementation of international instruments related to child labour due diligence
- Opportunity to learn from champion enterprises and experts from the International Labour Organisation ILO
- The group will run for one year, with approx. 4 group sessions, start planned in November 2022
- In order to benefit from the programme, enterprises should be willing to share good practices and challenges on tackling child labour in supply chains
- It will not offer an interpretation of the Swiss legislation!



Partners



- Leading business initiative to eradicate child labour in supply chains
- ILO as secretariat
- The Swiss group will take place under the umbrella of the CLP
- A privileged access to CLP's activities will be offered to participants of the Swiss group



- Official platform of the United Nations Global Compact in Switzerland and Liechtenstein
- It promotes responsible business practices by providing knowledge, tools and mutual learning
- It will be the secretariat of the Swiss group, ensuring the contact with the interested enterprises



Interested?

If you are interested, please contact:

info@globalcompact.ch

Event Series Child Rights & Business

Understanding and managing your company's impact on children

Following on from the study results, the event series intends to provide topic-specific information for practical action.

The multi-part series is a collaboration between Save the Children, UNICEF and the UN Global Compact Network in Switzerland & Liechtenstein.

Event Series – Objectives

- Raise awareness among companies on the topic of "children's rights and business", going beyond the issue of child labour.
- Provide concrete support and identify areas of action for companies to understand and manage their impacts (positive and negative) on children.
- Expand the network of company representatives who are interested in and committed to children's rights.

Event Series – Event #1

Risk Factor Child Labour – How businesses can protect childrens rights in their value chain

Thursday, 10th November 2022

The next events of the series will be conducted in 2023. Further information will follow in due course. If you have any questions feel free to contact info@globalcompact.ch.