

# CHECKLIST TO INTEGRATE THE CHILD RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH INTO THE PROJECT CYCLE



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©Katerina Ilievska



©Giti Carli Moen



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## THE CHILD RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

The rights-based approach is based on international human rights standards. **The child rights-based approach is a conceptual framework oriented towards the protection and promotion of children's rights across all sectors.** It is based in particular on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)<sup>1</sup>, the first legally-binding international instrument which explicitly recognizes people under the age of 18 as full subjects of rights and holders of compulsory fundamental rights (civil, political, social, economic and cultural).

This approach addresses the **root causes**, as well as immediate, underlying and structural causes of the non-fulfilment of rights and pushes for action on inequality and discrimination by targeting the people "left-behind" and the most vulnerable.

Children, as **holders of specific rights** and in need of appropriate protection, are a priority audience for the rights-based approach. Under this approach, projects implemented by international solidarity actors must focus on the realization of children's rights and apply human rights principles such as universality, indivisibility, accountability and participation, as well as the four guiding principles of the CRC: **non-discrimination**, the right of the child to **life, survival and development**, the **best interests of the child**, and the right to **participation**.



Diagram depicting the relationship between responsible actor and rights holder.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, children are rights holders, actors of their own development and must be supported to claim them.



Diagram showing how different levels within society impact on children's lives and the way in which the State, as prime duty bearer, is positioned at a number of these levels<sup>3</sup>.

The **duty bearers** (the State), and **responsible actors** (the family, the **community**, the civil society including childhood professionals, the private sector, etc.) must ensure respect, promotion and protection of the rights of the child by fostering the creation of environments conducive to the fulfillment of rights and by establishing appeal mechanisms.

In addition to being essential for children, it is acknowledged that the implementation of children's rights at the strategic and programmatic levels is essential to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and provides an impact on populations and a high social return on investment<sup>4</sup>.

Within the Groupe Enfance, a working group has reflected on quality criteria for the integration of the child rights-based approach in development and humanitarian projects. It used the recommendations made during discussions on the operational practices of the NGO members of the Groupe Enfance to feed this work. It was also inspired by the numerous existing works related to the subject (see bibliography in annex) and external consultations (experts, actors of international solidarity and/or children's rights...).

**The aim here is to propose a list of criteria to help professionals to better take into account the child rights-based approach** throughout the project management cycle. This checklist will help professionals to better understand the rights of the child and to integrate a rights-based approach in their logic and methods of intervention.

**Thus, this list of criteria is designed for civil society organizations (CSOs) as well as governmental technical services and the private sector, whether or not they are child rights professionals.** In particular, it is designed for the technical and financial partners of CSOs in order to guide them in assessing the integration of a child rights-based approach in development projects. Depending on the level of ownership and the objectives of the professionals, it can be a tool for self-evaluation of practices and/or for questioning them regarding the child rights-based approach.

This checklist, which follows all stages of the project cycle, from situation analysis to capitalization, and which integrates an organizational prerequisite, is not necessarily exhaustive. It should be used as a tool to question one's practices. In the same way, the sub-questions are points of vigilance to help qualify one's level of achievement.

STAGE OF THE  
PROJECT CYCLE

PERSPECTIVE

CRITERION

SUB-QUESTION

ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT	SITUATION ANALYSIS UPSTREAM OF THE PROJECT	CONCEPTION & PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	MONITORING-EVALUATION CAPITALIZATION
RIGHTS HOLDERS	DUTY BEARERS	RESPONSIBLE ACTORS	PARTICIPATION
<p><b>The project provides for the strengthening of children's knowledge of their rights and their ability to claim them (upstream and during the project's implementation).</b></p> <p>Do the activities allow children to better know/understand their rights and to claim them (leadership training, self-esteem, strengthening of communication skills, to form a network, etc.)?</p> <p>Do the activities planned or carried out enable children to identify violations of their rights? To claim their rights?</p> <p>To report these violations?</p> <p>To access to justice?</p>			<p>LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT</p> <p>USER NOTES</p> <p>comments</p> <p>A B C D</p>
<p><b>The project reinforces children's access to their rights.</b></p>			<p>A B C D</p> <p>comments</p>
<p><b>The realization of the rights of the child is part of the project's objectives and/or its expected results.</b></p> <p>Does the project aim to improve children's access to one or more of their rights by not focusing only on their needs?</p> <p>Does it aim to change the legal and political framework (at local and/or national level)?</p>			<p>A B C</p> <p>comments</p>

**The level of achievement can be understood as:**

**A**

**YES, totally**

Transformative, in favor of the realization and promotion of children's rights.

**B**

**YES, in part**

Positive, in favor of the realization of children's rights.

**C**

**YES, but not enough**

Neutral, no impact on children's rights.

**D**

**NO, not at all**

Potentially harmful to children's rights.

**Example of identification of the criterion's level of achievement:**

The organization regularly trains its employees and project stakeholders on the child-rights based approach.

- A** All the headquarters and field teams, all departments combined, have received training when hired and during continuing education sessions.
- B** All the headquarters and field teams, all departments combined, have received training when hired but no systematic continuing education.
- C** Only some departments have received training (program team for example) and some have not been able to receive it.
- D** No training.

**The organization adheres to the principles of human rights and the CRC.**

*Does the organization mention human rights and/or the rights of the child in its founding documents, in a Charter, etc.?*

*comments*

**The organization integrates the child rights-based approach in its strategic documents.**

*In particular, does the organization have a strategy/standards to ensure the participation of children, in accordance with ethical rules?*

*comments*

**The organization regularly trains its employees and project stakeholders on the child rights-based approach.**

*comments*

**The organization has a **child safeguarding** policy and procedures (at least a code of conduct) and implements it.**

*Does the organization have a procedure for reporting child **abuse**, disseminated to local partners/actors and accessible to children?*

*Does it have an internal reporting procedure in case of child abuse related to the organization?*

*Does it also have a reporting procedure and/or referral process in case of abuse outside the organization?*

*Are these procedures operational?*

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

The rights holders are identified according to data disaggregated by age, sex, geography and **vulnerability** (ethnic group, situation of disability, etc.).

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

The perceptions, knowledge, capacities and expectations of rights holders regarding their rights and their realization are analyzed and taken into account.

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

The situation analysis refers to and is based on the framework of international human rights conventions and their related mechanisms.

*Is the definition of the project based on the recommendations and observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other human rights monitoring bodies, especially those made directly to the State in question?*

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

Responsible actors are identified, consulted and participate in the situation analysis.

*What are their knowledge, capabilities, perceptions and will regarding the rights of the child and their realization?*

*Are these actors involved in data collection? Do they also participate in the analysis of the data collected?*

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

**The institutional, legal and political environment impacting the rights of the child, at local and national level, is analyzed.**

*What legal framework?*

*What institutions and what means?*

*What political commitments have been made by the State?*

*What public policies are implemented?*

*What obstacles?*

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

**Children participate in the analysis of their situation.**

*Is their participation implemented in an appropriate way (without endangering them, with their consent, through adequate teaching methods, etc.), understandable and adapted to the children's age?*

*Does it take into account exclusion factors (particularly with regard to **gender**, situation of disability, etc.)?*

*Are children involved in data collection? Do they also participate in their analysis?*

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

**Violations of the rights of the child are identified and analyzed.**

*What rights are not realized? What are the root causes of these violations?*

*Do they affect children differently with respect to their gender, disability, ethnicity, or other vulnerability factors?*

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

**Traditional practices, social and cultural norms (both those harmful and those favorable to the rights of the child) are analyzed regarding the rights of the child, without overlooking the gender approach.**

*Are the discriminatory norms/practices affecting the most vulnerable children in the realization of their rights identified and analyzed?*

*Are local communities involved in the analysis process of the situation?*

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

**The project provides for the strengthening of children's knowledge of their rights and their ability to claim them (upstream and during the project's implementation).**

*Do the activities allow children to better know/understand their rights and to claim them (leadership training, self-esteem, strengthening of communication skills, to form a network, etc.)?*

*Do the activities planned or carried out enable children to identify violations of their rights? To claim their rights?*

*To report these violations?*

*To access to justice?*

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

**The project reinforces children's access to their rights.**

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

**The realization of the rights of the child is part of the project's objectives and/or its expected results.**

*Does the project aim to improve children's access to one or more of their rights by not focusing only on their needs?*

*Does it aim to change the legal and political framework (at local and/or national level)?*

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

**Semantics retained for the project reflect the principles of the child rights-based approach.**

*Do the terms used emphasize the child's ability to act/the notion of right?*

*Example: to designate children, the term "actors" or "rights holders" is preferred over "beneficiaries".*

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

**The duty bearers and the responsible actors are identified in the project and specific activities are carried out with them.**

*Does the project take into account the existing actors/mechanisms (e.g. child protection committee)?*

*Are capacity building activities (on the rights of the child) planned for duty bearers and responsible actors? Do they allow them to meet their obligations regarding the rights of the child?*

*Are there plans to support responsible actors (e.g. community actors) so that they can also advocate for the rights of the child? Are there any activities planned to ensure that they are also able to report violations of children's rights?*

*Are advocacy actions with duty bearers planned or implemented for a normative, legislative and political framework more favorable to the rights of the child (at local and/or national level)?*

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

**The project provides for collaboration with other stakeholders in charge of the enforcement of children's rights locally (public actors, civil society organizations, grassroots community organizations, etc.).**

*Are forums for dialogue set up to discuss the rights of the child?*

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

**Children's opinions expressed during the analysis are taken into account during the design of the project.**

*Are the consultation results presented to them?*

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

**Children participate safely in the design and planning of activities.**

*Have we made sure that their participation does not put them at risk?*

*Are they consulted on planned activities?*

*Do they have the possibility of proposing activities themselves?*

*comments*



## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

**The project's activities integrate the participation of children.**

*Are the modalities of their participation planned according to their age and specificities (gender, vulnerability, etc.)?*

*Do the activities take into account the children's schedules, according to their best interests?*

*How are the activities likely to impact children? Could some be impacted differently because of constraints related to their age, gender, vulnerability?*

*Has their informed consent to participate been obtained?*

*Are the children equipped to be able to participate effectively?*

*Is there competent and trained staff mobilized for this?*

*Is the highest possible level of participation of children sought?*

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

**The project strengthens the capacities of children to speak up and be heard by decision-makers and responsible actors without harming them in claiming their rights.**

*Does it facilitate the creation of spaces for dialogue and/or children's access to decision-making mechanisms (particularly political) on issues that concern them, while guaranteeing gender equity and the representation of the most discriminated groups?*

*Are the respect of the principle of do no harm, the protection and the safety of children guaranteed in the context of their participation?*

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

**Project activities target the root causes of non-respect of children's rights, thereby reducing inequalities and combating discrimination.**

*Does the project aim to change the balance of power towards discriminated groups?*

*Does the project aim to promote equality between girls and boys?*

*Are there interventions implemented to fight against the structural causes of inequalities and discrimination (e.g. social standards)?*

*Are activities, for example, spaces of dialogue with responsible actors, aiming at understanding the construction of social norms on the one hand, and combating discriminatory norms on the other hand, particularly regarding gender, planned?*

*comments*



## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

The negative effects potentially caused by the intervention are monitored and documented. In addition, mitigation/response measures are put in place in time.

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

The results are expressed by data disaggregated according to age, sex, geography and vulnerability (ethnic minorities, disability, etc.).

*Is the protection of children's personal and/or sensitive data ensured?*

*Are only essential data collected? Can only authorized persons have access to it?*

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

The monitoring and evaluation activities provide information for the project indicators in order to assess the improvement in children's access to their rights, in particular the most vulnerable and discriminated children.

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

Accountability towards children is ensured.

*Have the children been informed of the results of the project?*

*Do they know how their point of view has been taken into account?*

*comments*

RIGHTS HOLDERS

DUTY BEARERS

RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

PARTICIPATION

ROOT CAUSES

The project indicators enable to assess the improvement of public policies, legislation and their implementation in favor of children's rights at local and national level.

*comments*

RIGHTS HOLDERS

DUTY BEARERS

RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

PARTICIPATION

ROOT CAUSES

Project data nurture the organization's advocacy for children's rights.

*comments*

RIGHTS HOLDERS

DUTY BEARERS

RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

PARTICIPATION

ROOT CAUSES

The project provides for feedback from the field, while ensuring the protection of personal and/or sensitive data (on the situation of children's rights) with national and/or international public bodies for the protection and promotion of human rights. (e.g. Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on serious violations of children's rights).

*Can data collected or the project's analysis provide material for UN reports?*

*comments*

RIGHTS HOLDERS

DUTY BEARERS

RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

PARTICIPATION

ROOT CAUSES

The children are involved in the project's monitoring and evaluation.

*Are measures put in place to involve the most discriminated/vulnerable?*

*Have we made sure that their participation is appropriate to their situation and does not threaten their safety and protection in any way?*

*Is children's access to protected mechanisms for feedback and complaints ensured?*

*Are qualitative data to assess the results of the project collected from children?*

*Is their level of satisfaction with the project also considered?*

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

Monitoring and evaluation activities make it possible to assess changes in practices/ behaviors/social standards (less discriminatory).

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

The evaluation allows a critical review of the project regarding the rights of the child in order to improve the operationalization of the child-rights based approach.

*comments*

## RIGHTS HOLDERS

## DUTY BEARERS

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

## PARTICIPATION

## ROOT CAUSES

The project provides for capitalization, including on good practices, concerning the realization of children's rights and provides for its dissemination.

*comments*

# DEFINITIONS

## ABUSE

An act that has a potential or actual negative effect on the safety, well-being, dignity or development of a child and that is deliberately perpetrated by a person who has a relationship of trust, power or responsibility towards that child (e.g. family member, other guardian). There are four main types of abuse: emotional or psychological, physical, sexual and neglect.

## BEST-INTERESTS-OF-THE-CHILD

One of the four guiding principles of the CRC (art. 3), guaranteeing at least the respect of the fundamental rights of the child. Thus, the child is entitled to have his or her best interests, i.e. what is best for his or her well-being, as a primary consideration in making decisions affecting him or her. A priori, this interest, which is determined by a variety of individual circumstances (age, level of maturity, presence or absence of parents, etc.), should prevail over the interests of the adults concerned. Nevertheless, this would not, in principle, be the «sole» consideration, but one of the first elements to be taken into account and which should significantly weigh in all decisions concerning children.

## CHILD

Any human being under the age of eighteen years, unless majority is attained earlier under the law applicable to him/her.

## CHILD SAFEGUARDING

The responsibility of organizations to ensure that their staff, activities and programs do not harm children. This means that they do not put children at risk of harm and/or abuse, and that any concerns about the protection of children in the communities where they operate are reported to the relevant authorities.

## COMMUNITY

The concept of community generally includes a structural dimension, which refers to a defined geographical area, and a functional dimension, which appears in the social and psychological ties between members. Here, the term community is defined geographically and refers to a group of people living in or near a particular place, such as a village or an urban area (e.g. children and their families, education personnel, health personnel, religious and/or traditional leaders, members of associations, etc.).

## DUTY-BEARERS

Actors with obligations towards rights holders. The State is the duty bearer under the CRC. Thus, the State has the obligation to respect rights (not to commit violations), to protect rights (to prevent violations and provide a response) and to promote rights (launch initiatives for the proper exercise of rights).

## GENDER

Social attributes, roles, behaviors and opportunities associated with being a girl or a boy, a woman or a man. Gender frames the relationships between girls and boys and between women and men. As a sociological concept, it differs from sex defined on the basis of biological characteristics.

## NON-DISCRIMINATION

The principle that no unfair distinction of any kind should be made between children, other persons or communities, for example distinctions based on age, sex, gender, physical appearance, ethnicity, religion, nation, language, sexual orientation or gender identity, state of health, family situation including socio-economic status, civil documentation, surname, morals, political opinions or trade union activities, or any other status of the child or his or her parents or other legal guardians.

## PARTICIPATION

Ongoing process based on mutual respect and the right to appropriate information, and characterized by dialogue between children, but also between children and adults. Through the voluntary exercise of this right, children can play an active role in all decision-making processes that affect them and learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and influence the outcome of these processes. Several levels of participation are possible, from simple consultation to full participation (e.g. child-initiated projects). Finally, participatory programming must be 'ethical' and ensure that it emphasizes non-discrimination, child protection, best interests of the child and the principle of 'do no harm' (see the nine basic requirements for effective and ethical participation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child ).

## RESPONSIBLE ACTORS

All non-state actors responsible for the realization of rights (families, communities, civil society, private sector, religious actors, etc.).

## RIGHTS-HOLDERS

Individuals and groups having rights recognized in particular by international conventions. Other sources (regional agreements, national laws) may also grant rights to individuals or to a group of individuals according to certain specificities.

## RIGHT-TO-LIFE, SURVIVAL-AND-DEVELOPMENT

Every child has the right to life and to the satisfaction of its basic needs: decent standard of living, housing, food, medical care. The child also has the right to develop to his or her fullest potential, including through the realization of the right to education, play and leisure, access to information and freedom of thought.

## ROOT-CAUSE

Determining factors and broader structural causes that lead to marginalization and exclusion. These may include discrimination (in law and in practice), lack of political will, lack of capacity of service providers and lack of child protection systems.

## VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability refers to the individual, family, community and societal characteristics that reduce the ability of individuals to cope with the adverse effects of threats and violations of their rights. According to the context, children can be more vulnerable depending on their age, civil status registration, sexual identity, gender, nationality, ethnical group, social condition, displacement situation, means of subsistence, situation of disability, health issues etc.

## REGARDING THE CHECKLIST DEVELOPMENT AND THE DEFINITIONS

Convention on the Rights of the Child,  
1989

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography,  
2000

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict  
2000

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure  
2011

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child  
1990

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities  
2006

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women  
1979

Child Rights Toolkit: Integrating Child Rights in Development Cooperation  
UNICEF, European Commission, 2014

Child Rights Programming. How to Apply Rights-Based Approaches to Programming (Handbook)  
Save the Children, 2005

Child Safeguarding Standards and how to implement them  
Keeping Children Safe, 2014

Guidelines for the Participation of Children in the IBCR's Project Management and Programs  
International Bureau for Children's Rights, 2018

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General Comment No. 12, "The right of the child to be heard"  
Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009

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The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2019

Qu'est-ce que les droits de l'enfant  
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Nigel Cantwell, Council of Europe, 2016

2017-2018 Annual Report  
International Bureau for Children's Rights, 2018

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International Bureau for Children's Rights, 2018

A Rights-Based Approach Encompassing All Human Rights for EU Development Cooperation  
European Commission, 2014

Statement of Opinion «For a Human Rights-Based Approach»  
French National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH), 2018

Human Rights and Development. A Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation  
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The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2019

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The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2019

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Save the Children Sweden, 2008

Education Rights: A guide for practitioners and activists  
Global Campaign for Education & ActionAid, 2007

## REGARDING THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF THE CHILD RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

Mapping the Global Goals for Sustainable Development and the Convention on the Rights of the Child  
UNICEF

Towards better investment in the rights of the child  
Human Rights Council, 2014

Investing in Children's Health: What Are the Economic Benefits?  
Paolo C. Belli, Flavia Bustreo & Alexander Preker, Bulletin of the World Health Organization, 2005

Investing in Every Child: An Economic Study of the Costs and Benefits of Eliminating Child Labour  
International Labour Organization, 2004

Supporting Child Rights. Synthesis of Lessons Learned in Four Countries.  
SIDA-NORAD, 2011