MO-CRIA:
Child Rights Impact
Self-Assessment Tool
for Mobile Operators

GUIDE TO SECOND EDITION

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Foreword

Mobile technology has become an integral part of children's daily realities all around the world – offering access to a world of information and opportunities to connect, learn, play, and much more. With mobile accounting for most broadband connections in low- and middle-income countries, the importance of the role played by mobile operators in this increasingly digital world cannot be overstated.

Indeed, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting surges in demand for mobile data around the world have only served to further highlight the many ways in which meaningful access to mobile technologies has become an indispensable lifeline for millions around the world, including children. The contributions that mobile technology can make to enhancing children's lives across different Sustainable Development Goal areas, from quality education to gender equality, have also long been recognized.

This second edition of the Child Rights Impact Self-Assessment Tool for Mobile Operators (MO-CRIA) offers a simple and yet comprehensive framework for mobile operators seeking to build a deeper understanding of child rights challenges, opportunities, and impacts related to their business. The 2021 edition builds on the experiences of companies which implemented the original tool.

When considering the impact of mobile operators on children's rights, it is a natural initial reaction to focus in on the digital environment itself. Of course, this is a vital and necessary element of impact assessment—and this revised tool offers greater detail on this topic, reflecting the increased importance of considering children's rights online.

But child rights impacts are also found in how companies manage facilities and assets, as well as how they develop, produce, market, and deliver products and services – whether this is done directly or through business partners and suppliers. Like all businesses, mobile operators have a responsibility to respect children's rights throughout their operations and through their relationships with employees, business partners, and other key stakeholders. This version of the MO-CRIA self-assessment tool has been updated with guidance and considerations across these different arenas.

Calls for companies to carry out human rights due diligence of their operations and wider value chain have and will continue to intensify. In light of this, the MO-CRIA self-assessment tool is a resource to support and facilitate further action.

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Abbreviations

CRBP	Children's Rights and Business Principles
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRIA	child rights impact assessment
CSAM	child sexual abuse material
DRC	the Democratic Republic of the Congo
DRR	disaster risk reductio
EMF	electromagnetic field
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
GSMA	Global System for Mobile Communications Association
HRIA	human rights impact assessments
ICMEC	International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children
ICNIRP	International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection
ICT	information and communication technology

Glossary

Best interests of the child	One of the four core principles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), this applies to all actions and decisions concerning children. It calls for active measures to respect their rights and promote their survival, growth and well-being as children, as well as measures to support and assist parents and others who have day-to-day responsibility for realizing children's rights.[1]
Child	Under CRC article 1, "a child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."
Child labour	Any work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It is defined by the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.[2]
Child sexual exploitation and abuse	Describes all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, e.g. "(a) the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; (b) the exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; (c) the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials", as well as a "sexual contact that usually involves force upon a person without consent". Child sexual exploitation and abuse increasingly takes place through the internet or with some connection to the online environment.[3]

1   UNICEF, UNGC, Save the Children, 'Children's Rights and Business Principles',: <http://childrenandbusiness.org/the-principles/introduction/>
2   A more detailed definition can be found on the ILO website at 'What is child labour' <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm>
3   ITU, 'Guidelines for Industry on Child Online Protection', 2020, <www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/Pages/COP.aspx>

Child sexual abuse material (CSAM)	Although many jurisdictions still label images and videos of child sexual abuse 'child pornography' or 'indecent images of children', we refer to the issues collectively as 'child sexual abuse material' (CSAM).
	The term CSAM is used to refer to material that represents acts that are sexually abusive and/or exploitative to a child. This includes, but is not limited to, material recording the sexual abuse of children by adults; images of children included in sexually explicit conduct, and the sexual organs of children when the images are produced or used for primarily sexual purposes.
	This term more accurately describes the content. Pornography refers to a legitimate, commercialized industry and, as the Luxembourg Guidelines state, the use of the term: "may (inadvertently or not) contribute to diminishing the gravity of, trivializing, or even legitimizing what is actually sexual abuse and/or sexual exploitation of children. The term 'child pornography' risks insinuating that the acts are carried out with the consent of the child and represent legitimate sexual material".[4]
Conflict minerals	Mining of some metals and minerals used in mobile network equipment and devices has been linked to armed conflict in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, by directly or indirectly benefiting armed groups. Mining in these conflict zones has also been linked to abuses such as child and forced labour and the use of children as soldiers. 'Conflict minerals', as defined by the US legislation, currently include the metals tantalum, tin, tungsten and gold (3TG), while the OECD 'Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas' has a broader scope and covers all minerals, not only 3TG.[5]
Cyberbullying	Cyberbullying describes an intentionally aggressive act carried out repeatedly by either a group or an individual using digital technology and targeting a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself. It usually involves "using digital technology and the internet to post hurtful information about someone, purposely sharing private information, photos or videos in a hurtful way, sending threatening or insulting messages (via email, instant messaging, chat or texts), spreading rumours and false information about the victim or purposely excluding them from online communications".[6]
Grooming	Grooming/online grooming, as defined in the Luxembourg Guidelines, refers to, "the process of establishing/building a relationship with a child either in person or through the use of the Internet or other digital technologies to facilitate either online or offline sexual contact with that person". It is the criminal activity of becoming friends with a child in order to try to persuade the child to have a sexual relationship.[7]
Notice and takedown	Operators and service providers are sometimes notified of suspect content online by customers, members of the public, law enforcement or hotline organizations. 'Notice and takedown' procedures refer to a company's processes for the swift removal ('takedown') of illegal content, defined according to the jurisdiction, as soon as it has been made aware ('notice') of the presence of illegal content in its services.
Parental control tools	Software that allows users, typically a parent, to control some or all functions of a computer or other device that can connect to the internet. Typically, such programmes can limit access to particular types or classes of websites or online services. Some also provide scope for time management, e.g. the device can be set to have access to the internet only between certain hours. More advanced versions can record all texts sent or received from a device. The programmes normally will be password protected.[8]
	Control tools need to strike a balance between the right to protection from all forms of violence and exploitation, and a user's rights to information, freedom of expression, privacy and non-discrimination, as defined in the CRC. It is unlikely to be possible to remove all the risks to children that exist online. Additionally, beyond a certain point, attempting to do so could threaten children's access to the multiple benefits provided by meaningful access to the internet.
Grievance mechanisms and remediation	The term remediation refers to both the processes of providing a remedy for an adverse human rights impact and to the substantive outcomes that can counteract or make good the adverse impact.
	Where a business identifies that it has caused or contributed to an adverse impact on human rights, it should provide for or cooperate in their remediation through legitimate processes, including effective operational level grievance mechanisms or judicial mechanisms, as appropriate.
	Operational level mechanisms should be accessible to girls and boys, their families and those who represent their interests, and meet the effectiveness criteria for non-judicial grievance mechanisms set out in UNGP 31.[9]
Young worker	Not all work carried out by a child is child labour. For UNICEF, 'young workers' are those above the legal working age and under 18 years. The international minimum age for full time, non-hazardous work is 15. National standards may be higher. In accordance with International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 138, countries with an insufficiently developed economy and education system may have temporarily registered a general minimum age of 14. Business has an important role to play in promoting decent youth employment and in respecting and supporting the rights of children in the workplace who have reached the general minimum age for employment.[10]

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4 Ibid.
5 Dodd-Frank Act on Disclosing the Use of Conflict Minerals, Section 1502, <www.sec.gov/opa/Article/2012-2012-163htm—related-materials.html>; and the OECD 'Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas', <www.oecd.org/corporate/mne/mining.htm>
6 ITU, 'Guidelines for Industry on Child Online Protection', 2020, <www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/Pages/COP.aspx>
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 UNICEF, 'Respecting the rights of young workers', <www.unicef.org/csr/243.htm>

1. Introduction

Children[11] make up almost one third of the world's population[12] and interact with business directly and indirectly in multiple ways: for example, as consumers, as family members of employees, as members of communities affected by business operations, and as young workers.[13]

Childhood is a time when physical, social and emotional experiences and conditions have profound impact in shaping emerging physical, social and mental capacities, with lasting consequences for both individuals and society, sometimes intergenerationally. Growth in childhood is rapid and formative, and children, especially young children, require others to assist and take care of them as parents and caregivers. In all of these ways, children are different from adults.

This is recognized in the existence of a specific United Nations Convention articulating the rights of children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most ratified human rights standard in the world, sets out the rights that must be realized for children to develop to their full potential. It offers a vision of the child as an individual and as a member of a family and community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to his or her age and stage of development. By recognizing children's rights in this way, the Convention firmly sets the focus on the whole child.

The Convention recognizes the fundamental human dignity of all children and the urgency of ensuring their well-being and development. It makes clear the idea that a basic quality of life should be the right of all children, rather than a privilege enjoyed by a few. It also outlines that children need special safeguards and care

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MOBILE OPERATORS?

As a relatively vulnerable (and often invisible and marginalized) business stakeholder group, children "can be disproportionately, severely and permanently impacted by business activities, operations and relationships".[14] Making children visible merits special consideration and attention from businesses when they consider their human rights impacts.

Mobile operators affect children through the ways they manage their facilities and assets, and how they develop, produce, market and deliver products and services – whether directly or through business partners and suppliers. They have a responsibility to respect children's rights throughout their operations and through their relationships with business partners and key stakeholders. The Children's Rights and Business Principles (CRBPs) provide explicit guidance on what it means for business to respect and support children's rights (see box below).