

Child Safeguarding and the Business Sector

15th January 2026



Children's Rights - Your Business

Child Rights & Child
Safeguarding

**Ida Hyllested, Senior Adviser,
UNICEF**

15 January 2025



1/3

of the world's population

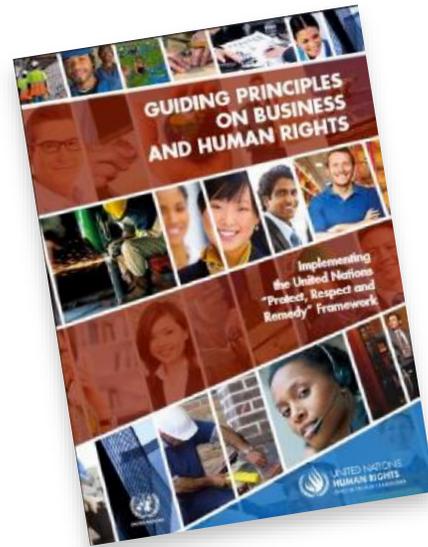
- Business impacts children in multiple ways beyond child labour in the workplace, marketplace and community and environment
- Children's rights are material to most companies – both financial and impact materiality
- Every year, up to 20% of children experience online sexual exploitation or abuse
- 1/3 of the world's population is overweight or obese
- 80% of Global CO2 emissions come from just 57 companies – climate crisis is a child rights crisis
- In 2024, 138 million children estimated to be in child labour

Children are
rightsholders &
stakeholders
for every business
in every sector

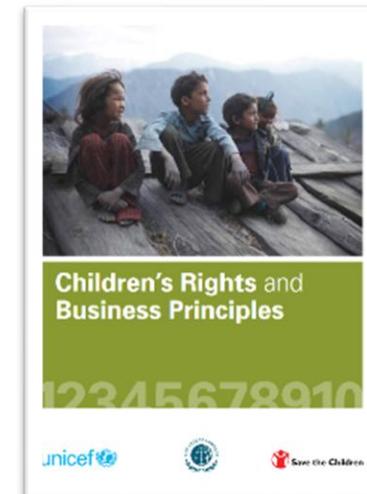


The normative foundation for establishing the responsibility of business

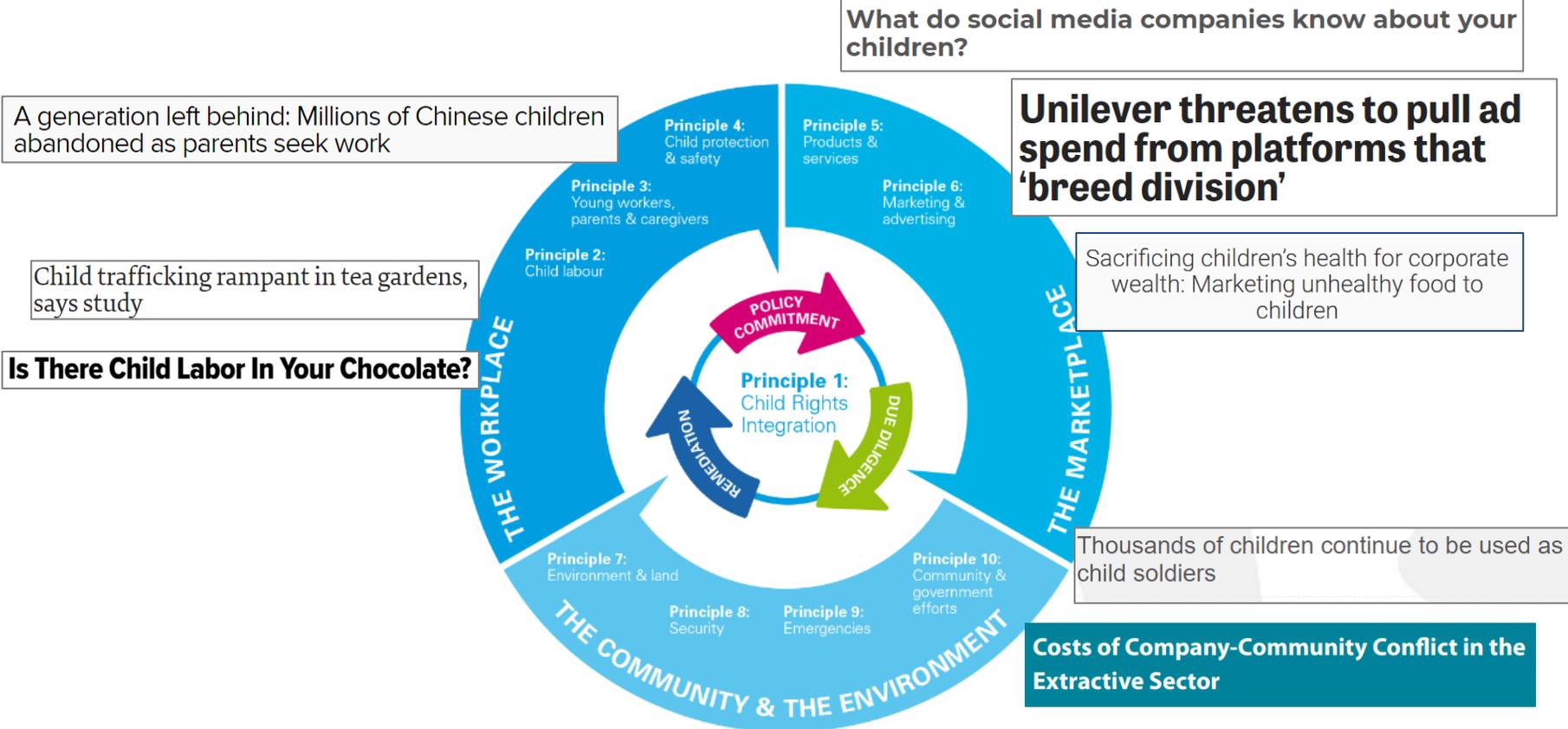
UN CRC & Children's Rights and Business Principles (CRBP) call out the responsibility of business to respect children's rights



The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) provides an authoritative global standard for preventing and addressing the risk of adverse impacts on human rights linked to business activity – HRDD is now a normative expectation



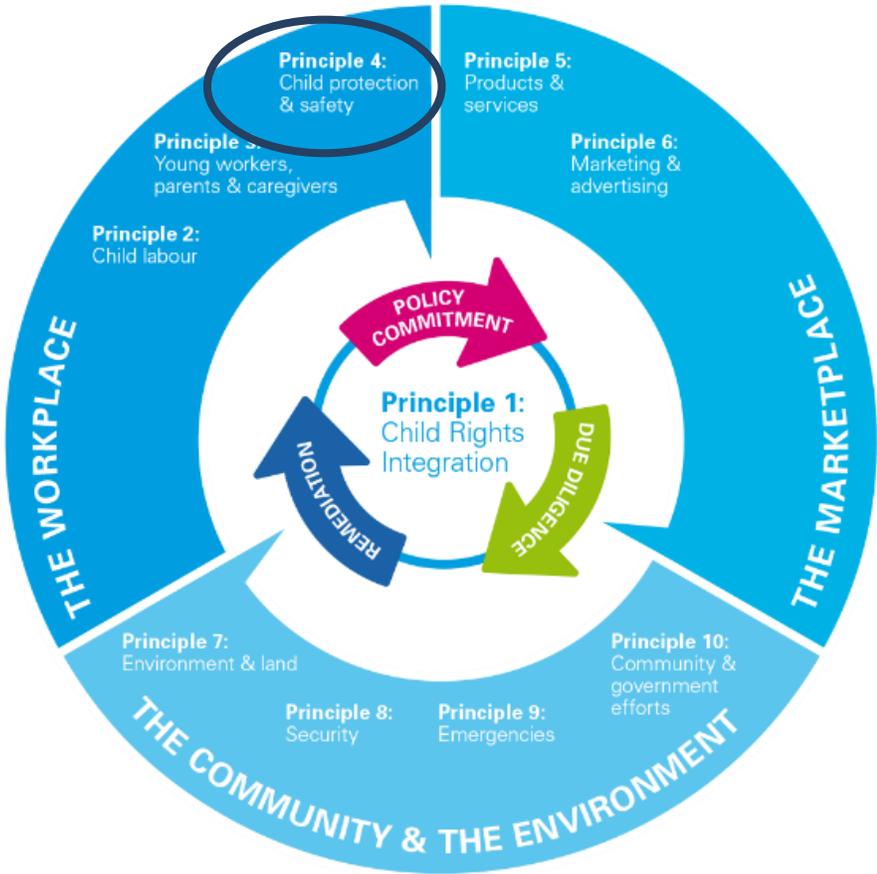
Understanding Child Rights Impacts



Child Safeguarding



Most companies, their employees or affiliates come into contact with children at some point during the course of business, **and may cause harm to children** if they fail to adequately identify and address this risk.



In conclusion

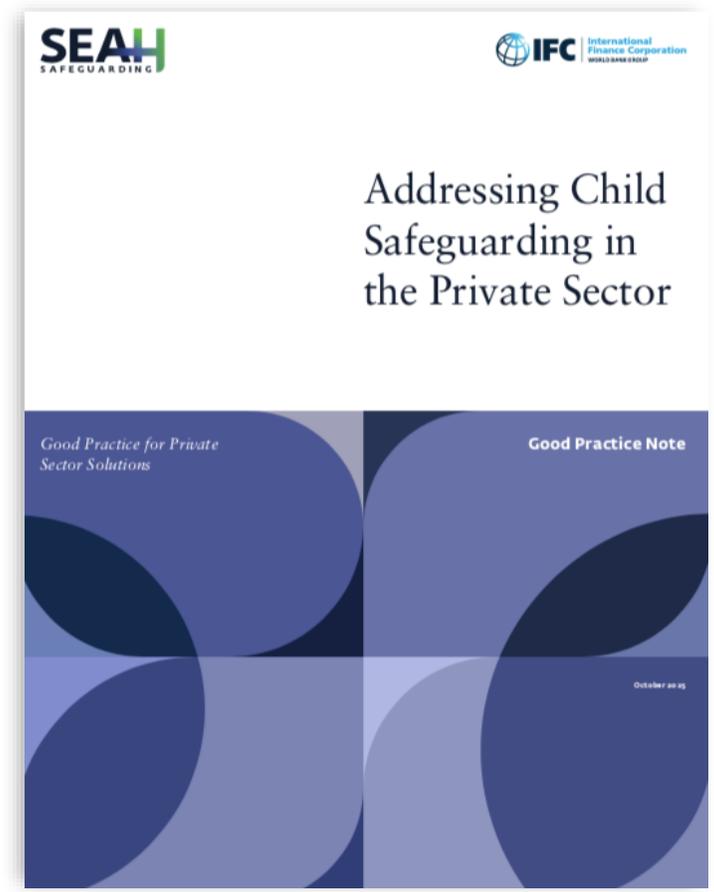
Children are insufficiently visible in the design and implementation of measures and mechanisms supporting or requiring responsible business conduct, and even less heard.

When businesses fail to identify their salient impacts, the result is children continuing to experience abuses. Leaving children invisible means risking **leaving out 30% of the world's population**. That is not just an oversight. In the context of the challenge of global sustainability, it is **negligent**.

Child safeguarding in the Business Sector –

Introduction to the IFC Good Practice Note (GPN)

Stephanie Delaney, IFC
Child Protection Specialist



Purpose of the Good Practice Note

- Support private sector action on child safeguarding
- Align business practices with international standards and good practice
- Provide practical, risk-based guidance

Child Safeguarding for Businesses

Ensuring that children (under 18 years old) are not harmed as a result of the business's operations and activities

- Includes protection from all forms of abuse and neglect
- Considers complex manifestations of abuse, such as exploitation (including trafficking) and child labour
- Involves preventative actions (risk mitigation) and response measures

Contents of GPN

- Provides guidance for businesses
- Focused on risk, actions, and implementation
- Synthesises current practice



Section 2. Understanding Safeguarding

- Definitions
- The Business Case



Section 3. Causes and Risks

- Causes of Abuse and Exploitation
- Industry Sector Risk Factors



Section 4. Key Actions for Businesses

- 5 Step Framework for Assessment, Mitigation, and Response



Section 5. Key Actions for Financial Institutions

- Role of Financial Institutions in Promoting Safeguarding



Annexes

- Practice tools and resources

A woman wearing a light-colored hijab and a dark jacket is smiling and looking down. In the background, a man is looking at a laptop screen. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter.

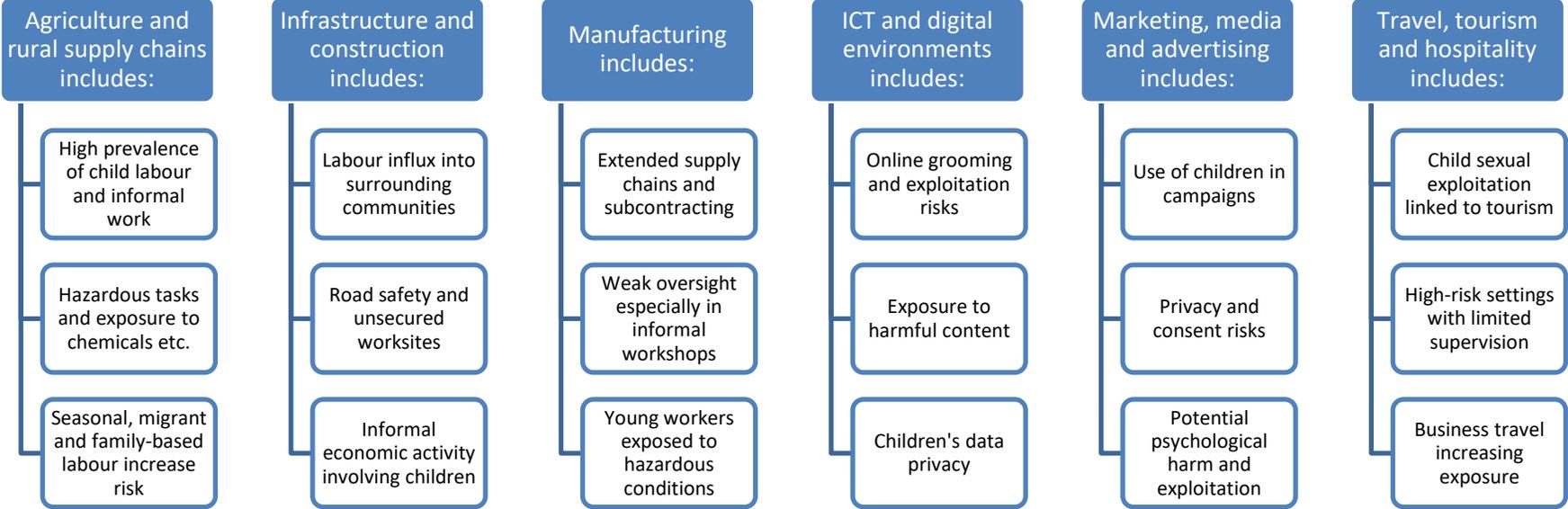
Risk mitigation

- **Business operations and worksites**
- **Supply chains and contractors**
- **Community interactions including digital platforms**
- **CSR activities**

Context and sector risks matter:

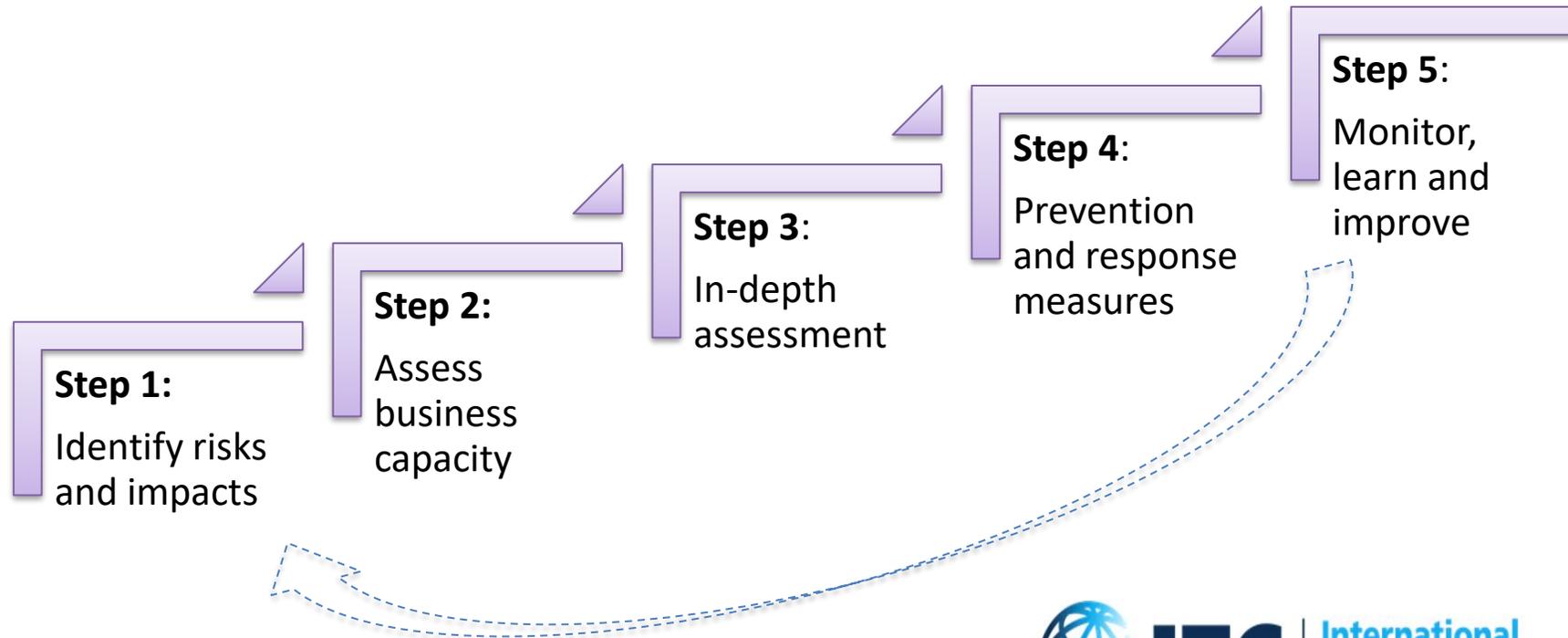
- **Risks vary significantly by industry/sector**
- **Operating environment shapes exposure and vulnerability**
- **One-size-fits-all approaches are less effective**

Risk Identification and Mitigation



Five-Step Action Framework

- Risk-based and scalable approach
- Applies across sectors and geographies



What This Means for Banks and Investors

- **Clear expectations for clients**
- **Stronger ESG and E&S due diligence**
- **Child safeguarding integrated into E&S systems**
- **Improved portfolio risk management**



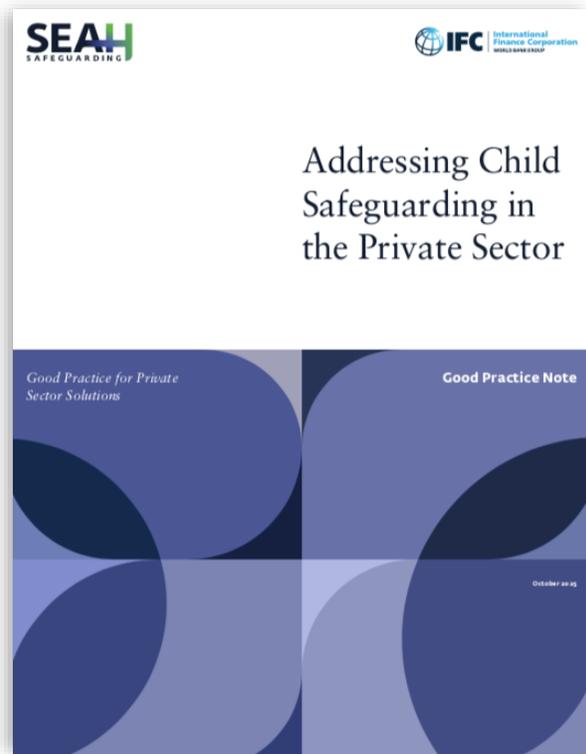
Key messages

- Child safeguarding is a material business issue
- Strong systems protect children and business value
- Sector and environment drive risk exposure - context matters
- Understanding context is critical to prevention
- Safeguards must be proportionate to risk
- Child safeguarding risks are manageable - practical, scalable actions are available
- Banks and investors play a critical role



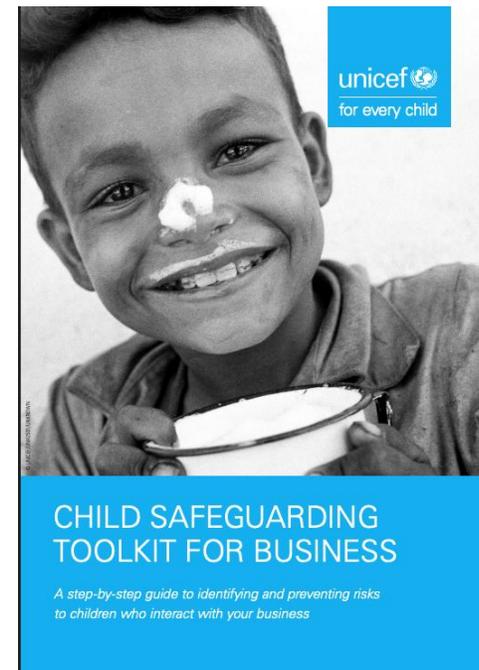
Thank You!

Key resources



<https://www.ifc.org/en/insights-reports/2025/addressing-child-safeguarding-in-the-private-sector>

<https://www.unicef.org/childrightsandbusiness>



<https://www.unicef.org/childrightsandbusiness/media/601/file/Child-Safeguarding-Toolkit.pdf>