

## IV. Implementation of Children’s Rights-Based Welfare Projects

So far, we have investigated why the rights perspective is necessary in social welfare practice, why it is useful, the specific meaning of being rights-based, and especially the concept of children's rights-based and the need for the practical implications. In this chapter, we will use these general understanding to examine exactly how children’s rights-base is applied and implemented in the ChildFund’s welfare projects.

### 1. The Meaning of Children’s Rights-Based Welfare Projects

Children’s Rights-Based Welfare Projects are based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child(UNCRC), and it not only refers to the individual and immediate problem-solving of problems that the children are faced with, but it seeks to identify the fundamental cause and tries to bring structural changes. The contents of projects should be considered from a children-centered perspective, the participation of children should be emphasized, and the children’s rights should be respected not only in the outcome of the project but also during the implementation process.

In summary, ChildFund’s Children’s Rights-Based Welfare Projects refers to

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All activities which, based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,  
respect children’s right at all stages of the project implementation,  
empower the children to help them realize their rights,  
and promote the duty bearer to perform their duty to the fullest.

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### 2. Implementation Principles and Core Factors of Children’s Rights-Based Welfare Projects

All welfare projects of ChildFund have the realization of children’s rights as the main purpose, and the principles for project implementation are as follows.

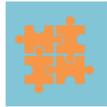
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1. All projects shall respect the children as the rights-holder.
  2. The projects shall put the best interests of the children first.
  3. The projects shall be based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
  4. The projects shall be based on evidence, and all the evidence shall start with the voices of the children in the field.
  5. Acknowledge that children are always growing, and consider the characteristics and growth potential of each child.
  6. Provide rooms for children to fully express their opinions when making decisions related to them, reflect the opinions they have expressed, and provide feedback on decisions made.
  7. Seek not only immediate problem solving of the difficulties that children face, but also structural and fundamental change.
  8. Respect children's rights at all stages of the project implementation.
  9. Projects shall be conducted in a safe environment in a child-friendly manner.
  10. Consider the most vulnerable children first and ensure that no child is excluded or isolated from the project.
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The children's rights-based implementation principles have the principles and standards of children's rights at its base, and also applies the general principles, the PANEL principle, and the factors according to the concepts from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It suggests that all projects must focus on realizing the rights. This special approach is intended to be applied to children on the basis of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as children have their unique special needs as human beings but also because they are different from adults, meanwhile they are also vulnerable.

The Core Factors of the Children's Rights-Based Welfare Projects based on the implementation principles are as follows.

<Core Factors of Children's Rights-Based Welfare Projects>

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<p>Child-centered Emphasis on children, their rights and their role as social actors</p>			<p>Accountability Emphasis on immediate problem resolution and fundamental cause Emphasis on accountability for the promotion, protection and realization of children's rights by the duty bearers</p>
<p>Non-discrimination Working with the most isolated and suffering to eradicate discrimination based on gender, class, race or disability</p>			<p>Best interest of children Make decisions by putting focus on the impact to children during all decision-making process</p>
<p>Development of children Services that consider the individual characteristics of children are dedicated to ensuring that their full potential is developed</p>			<p>Participation Promote the capacity to maximize children's participation and promote effective participation of children</p>
<p>Child-friendly environment Creating a child-friendly environment through measures that enhance children's understanding and by building a safe environment</p>			<p>Partnership Building partnerships and consortiums to promote, protect and realize children's rights</p>

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## 1) Child-centered

Child-centered projects are different from simply doing projects for children. Being child-centric means acknowledging the existential value and dignity of children under the age of 18 who are born as human beings and are living in childhood, and that their rights can be protected, respected and realized by fully considering the various characteristics of childhood. In addition, it means acknowledging and emphasizing the role of children as social actors. However, we often view children with preconceived assumptions or prejudice over the level of competency we expect from them. In other words, there is a tendency to judge children using the scale of adult standards, and not by the value they show themselves. However, child-centric means to not only view children as subjects to listen to and respect, but also see them as more autonomous beings in the exercise of rights and active subjects in their own lives. At the same time, it is necessary to recognize that the children are in a process of development and needs protection.

### **Basic Elements of Child-Centered Approach**

- Fully consider the growing power and development capacity of children.
- Acknowledge the resilience of children (resilience, recoverability, durability, strength, etc.).
- Don't judge the children's abilities.  
(Don't carelessly make unwarranted assumptions that children can do this or can't do that, etc.)
- Don't make presumptions on children, their perspective or needs.
- Consider the child's holistic developmental needs.

### **2) Accountability**

In Children's Rights-Based Welfare Projects, accountability emphasizes analyzing and resolving not only immediate problems faced by children, but also the fundamental causes. Also, for this purpose, roles and responsibilities to strengthen the accountability of the duty bearer should be clearly specified.

Child A is 14 years old, but has delayed enrollment for 2 years and therefore is now in 5th grade. The mother raises the child alone, but the mother has no will to work due to alcohol dependence and therefore the family is facing financial difficulties. Also, the indifference to the child has led to long-term absence from school, and the neglect by the education system is sustained. Due to the long-term absence, Child A has low will to continue academics and stated that he is unable to attend school as he cannot leave his drunk mother alone

The problem that surfaced in the above case is the long-term absence of the child. Therefore, it is important to set a case intervention objective to resolve the long-term absence. However, simply encouraging the child to attend school can solve the immediate-problem, but it cannot solve the fundamental cause of neglect by the education system. In this case, the reason for the prolonged absence by Child A is likely due to the alcohol addiction by his mother and the resultant neglect. To fundamentally resolve the problem, the fundamental cause of the mother's alcohol addiction must be identified and intervention must take place. Hence, the practitioners should intervene in cases by identifying and considering the fundamental and structural cause of the problem that exists underneath the surface of the problem.

Also, rights-based approach places importance on the relationship between the rights-holder and the duty bearer. Rights-holder is the person whose rights need to be respected, while the duty bearer is the person with the duty to protect, respect, and realize the rights of the rights-holder.

As mentioned earlier, in the above situation the mother who is the primary duty bearer to protect, respect and realize the rights of Child A did not fulfill her duties. In such situation, planning review and implementation activities are required to increase the awareness and ability to fulfill the duties of the duty bearer. Therefore, practitioners must be able to secure sufficient information about relevant laws and regulations, and systems and policies that can be supported, and be able to explain the short-term and long-term problems that may arise if the duty bearer does not responsibly fulfill their duties. Also, if there is insufficient resources or systems available for support, then the issue must be continuously raised to the relevant institution or government departments to change this, so that the accountability of the institution and the government department can be enhanced.

### 3) Non-discrimination

To effectively achieve the purpose of a project, it is sometimes specified based on a certain child. However, excluding children from certain classes regardless of the purpose of the project is a violation of the rights of Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Violating a different right to realize a right cannot be called a children's rights-based approach project. Therefore, when implementing a project, care must be taken not to discriminate the children, and all projects should be implemented by considering the availability and accessibility of all children.

The non-discrimination principle is important as a standard in the implementation of a project, but more importantly, the children must not be discriminated due to the values held by the practitioner themselves. All human beings live with some level of stereotypes and values based on their knowledge and experience. However, these thoughts and values are not recognized during normal occasions, but when the person meets someone related or come into contact with such situations, the thoughts and values become concrete. But if these stereotypes and values judge and condemn children during the implementation process, the process can no longer be called a social welfare practice.

One day, Counselor A witnessed child B, one of the counselees, among those who participated in a homosexual gathering. Counselor A has never really thought about homosexuality, but after witnessing child B, the thoughts about homosexuality began to materialize. The counselor worried about how to face child B the next time they meet.

Social welfare practitioners exist for those who are excluded or isolated due to internal factors or social, economic, and cultural factors. The practitioners must be someone who they can trust even when no one understands their feelings. Therefore, when we meet children, we must put down our values and try to understand the children from the children's point of view. This does not mean that practitioners should change their ideology, beliefs, or religious view for non-discrimination. As explained in the usefulness of social welfare practice from the right's perspective, children should not be discriminated against and problems should not be defined according to the values of the practitioners.

#### 4) Best interest of children

The best interest of children principle means that the child's interests must be prioritized in all decisions that affect children. All decisions must consider its impact on children, and this requires expanding the selection and decision-making process with children.

In ○○-Gu, there is a library for children. ○○ Library opens from 9am to 6pm. In addition to books for children, the library was recognized as an excellent library due to its various programs and experiential activities that reflected the needs of the library users. However, children in middle school and above, who leave school at 5 pm, were always met with a closed library. During a meeting with the regional mayor, the children requested for the opening time to be extended. As a result, ○○-Gu set the required budget for the children and hired a librarian in order to operate the library during the evening, and the operating hours were extended to 9pm.

In the above case, ○○-gu operates a library for children, and is implementing diverse and meaningful programs such that it was able to be selected as an excellent library. However, the operating hours of the library have been set in consideration of the conventional practice and convenience of employment and administration, without considering the practicality for children who actually need to use the library. After hearing the opinions of the children, these opinions were taken

into consideration seriously in the best interests of the children, and as a result additional budget and resource were allocated and the operating time was adjusted.

Considering the best interests of children does not mean accepting an opinion that is “good enough” based on the adult’s judgment. Impact to children must be considered at all times, from the minimum rules required in practice to critical operational decisions. Whatever the circumstance, decisions must be made in the best interests of children.

#### 5) Development of children

Although Child A was diagnosed with a severe intellectual disability during infancy, the parents canceled the disability diagnosis in order to have the child admitted to a general school. Afterwards, the child was admitted to a general elementary school, but the child’s academic achievement was substandard and therefore is studying in the special needs class, and furthermore, the child’s ability to carry out daily life is low, such as not being able to care for one’s own hygiene.

Article 6(2) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes that every effort should be made to ensure that the children survive and develop “to the fullest”. Here, the concept of “development” doesn’t simply refer to the preparation needed for a child to become an adult. Child development is a holistic issue and must be tailored to the level of development for each child. In the particular case of children with disabilities, we are told to support them “in a way that maximizes their personal development, including social integration and cultural and mental development”. However, in the above case, they ignored the developmental level of the child and failed to fulfill the responsibility and duty to help the child develop their abilities. The fact that Children's Rights-Based Welfare Projects are based on the principle of non-discrimination does not mean that all children should be treated at the same level of development. Interventions should be made to promote holistic development by taking into consideration the individual characteristics of the children.

#### 6) Participation

The process of working for children's rights must go beyond working for children and become a process with children. We should acknowledge that the children are the rights-holders, and various forms of tools, methods, environments and places to express opinions and ideas proposed by children

should be created. Factors and risks that become obstacles to children's expression of opinions should be identified, and a mechanism to minimize and protect them should be established.

Also, ignoring an opinion or idea proposed by children as unrealistic, or thinking that an adult knows better, limits participation by children. Therefore, projects should be implemented with an awareness and attitude that respects and takes seriously the children's opinions, rather than simply listening.

Participation is the foundation for establishing the framework of a rights-based approach, and those who are powerless and excluded from society become decision makers in their own lives and in matters that affect their lives. Realization of rights cannot happen without participation. It means children can more actively enjoy their freedom by recognizing their rights. Furthermore, it means becoming a mature citizen who can request for accountability from various duty bearers including the government for the rights of oneself and others.

Social worker A is planning a program to go on a trip with the local children. In order to promote children's participation in the planning process, children were allowed to plan their own trips, but for safety reasons, the areas they could go to were limited and the budget was also set. At first, only the scope of the region and the budget size was planned to be determined, but gradually, due to issues such as schedule and period, there was only a small portion that the children can make decision on. Although the children were told "you can decide everything", in reality, it is uncertain whether there was any actual participation by the children.

Hart (1997) pointed out that 'it is unrealistic to expect children to suddenly become responsible and engaged adults when they have not had the experience over participation skills or responsibility.' Directing children to participate without any sort of information is equivalent to using children as decorations or making them participate only in formality during program planning. For real participation to take place, information for understanding the situation and forming opinions must first be provided. Therefore, the purpose for "why is this program needed?" must be evident from the planning process of the program. Participation just for the sake of participation is meaningless, planning is required for how to promote more active participation. In the case above, in order to promote children's participation, it is necessary to accurately guide children to the purpose of the

program and to analyze predictable limitations. The limitations should be analyzed based on the level of development of the child, the purpose of planning the program, and the operating status of the institutions, etc. Based on such information, it is necessary to explain to the children why the regulations are necessary and to make the final regulations through discussion with the children. Meaningful participation can be achieved when children clearly understand the agreed rules. Also, the agreed information must be applied to provide feedback so that children will know that their opinions can influence the decisions.

Hart (1997) presented the ‘Participation Ladder’ and described the level of child participation in 8- stages as follows.

< Hart’s Participation Ladder ><sup>1)</sup>

Stages		Details
Stage 1	Manipulation	Stage where adults use children to voice their opinions, or even manipulating (Adults acting, but claiming that it was the children’s thoughts)
Stage 2	Decoration	Stage where children are included to perform a participatory activity or task (Children are decoratively included in activity planned by adults)
Stage 3	Tokenism	Stage where adults try to make the children participate, but they practically cannot (Participation takes place, but only as a formality)
Stage 4	Assigned but informed	Stage where sufficient information in relation to the participation is provided but the children are not able to lead (Inability to get a proper participation experience due to limited participation)
Stage 5	Consulted and informed	Stage where participation is designed by the adult, but the adult and children agree during the process

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1) Young Soo Lee (2015). Extracted from lecture notes from ‘Teenage rights and Participation’ of Youth Education degree at Korea Broadcasting and Communication University

		(Opinions are heard, but decisions are made at the discretion of the adult)
Stage 6	Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children	Stage where adults lead the participating activity, but the children's influences are reflected (Influence of children are reflected to some extent)
Stage 7	Child-initiated and directed	Stage where the children plan and lead the participating activity from the start (Children lead the entire process)
Stage 8	Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults	Stage where the children lead the participating activity, but share the information and decision-making with the adults (Cooperating with variety of people, including adults, to create ways to participate)

From the presented stages, stage 1 to 3 cannot be seen as participation, but a high level or highest participation stage isn't always the most ideal either. Opportunities for participation should be ensured at a level where children can best use their abilities so that they can progressively take initiative and participate in decisions related to them.

Children can increase the effectiveness and efficiency of a project by participating in the overall process of planning, operation, and evaluation as the subject of the activity or as the object of the project. Also, children actively participating in children's rights-based projects recognize themselves as major actors in their own development. In addition, children's participation in activities as the planner and operator can result in children's rights-based approaches becoming an essential concept in practice.

Refer to the [Supporting Data] for an approach that respects children's perspectives and promotes participation.

“Adults are missing a very important point. At what age do you think children will have enough skills to contribute and participate actively? We cannot learn the skills of participation unless you give the children the opportunity to participate. Please give us an opportunity, and see how we fly.”

- Khairul Azri (17), Representative<sup>2)</sup> of Malaysia at the  
UN General Assembly Special Session for Children

### 7) Child-friendly environment

All the environments with children should consider and ensure not only physical safety, but also both humanitarian and emotional stability. All services must be conducted in a safe place and location, and it must be an environment where help can be requested easily when needed. In addition, practitioners should identify in advance any factors that can threaten children's safety and take them into consideration. The location should be somewhere the children can be encouraged to speak up their voices.

A child-friendly environment does not just refer to the special area. All documents and conversations must be explained in a manner and language that can be understood at the children's level of development, and processes and results related to counseling and services must be fully explained and understood. Children are not being invited to the services we provide. Children are not simply beneficiaries of support, and they should be sufficiently informed about all matters relating to them. True participation will be possible only when the children fully understands the information.

Institution A plans to host a 2-day camp for lower grade students in elementary school. To encourage participation from the students, the institution prepared an information guide using the information guide used in a previous camp for university students. Information such as camp schedule, contents, guide on signing up for insurance, host lecturer profile, etc. were included. Also, to provide a good facility, they reserved a location with 1 bed per person, roof-top swimming pool, and dinner buffet.

In the above case, Institution A created an information guide to encourage participation in the camp by the children. The information are all details that the participants must know, such as the schedule, contents, guide on signing up for insurance, etc. However, it is necessary to consider whether the

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2) Source: Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (2010). “Youth leaders become human rights defenders”. extracted from p.33

content of the guide is intended for children and whether the terms used are easy for children to understand. To provide the best camp site for the children, it is also important to find a place that the children will enjoy. But what is more important than exploring things that children enjoy, is the consideration for a location that is safe and friendly for children. In all environments with children, safety should be considered and ensured in all aspects, for example, whether the emergency exit signs are properly lit, whether there is any danger in using the rest rooms, whether child-safety measures are in place in the swimming pools, etc.

#### 8) Partnership

‘Partner’ is a word that encompasses all cooperation relationships that occur during various situations, it refers to all institutions/organizations cooperating to achieve a common objective. Cooperating with other institutions increases the chances of achieving the change children need and enables them to fulfill their respective roles as duty bearers. The basis of these partnerships is that there should be common values, and each position and role should be divided. Care must be taken when selecting the partners to work with. Partnership is also a process where both parties learn slowly from each other, and the partners should be able to share the achievements they have made together. Until now, partnerships have mainly focused on sharing or dividing the resources that each of the institutions possess. The success of a partnership was determined based on the list of resources received from the other institution. However, partnerships in children's rights-based projects should have a common vision for the realization of children's rights, should strengthen the capabilities of each, and should keep the interests of children as the highest priority over the interests of institutions or other relationships. We should remember that the partnership we need is a mutual relationship for the realization of children's rights and it is not to share each other's resources.

### 3. Application of Children's Rights-Based Welfare Projects

#### A. Children's rights-based approach during planning of welfare projects

The core factors of the Children's Rights-Based Welfare Project described above also affects the planning of the project. First, when analyzing the context of the project, focus should be placed on what issue is currently the problem, and which of the children's rights are being violated. Also, projects must be planned by putting focus on who the duty bearer is, what the duties of the duty

bearer are, and the obstacles and solutions in carrying out those duties. The participation of children, who are rights-holders, should be a prerequisite for project planning, and the creation of an environment where participation is possible and capacity building should be preceded. In addition, all children must be able to participate without exception and circumstances where certain children may be excluded or restricted from participation should be carefully reviewed.

Children's rights-based welfare projects should focus on the most isolated children and including them. In particular, the principle of non-discrimination should be considered in detail. Even if child-related projects focus on specific issues related to the identity of children, such as gender, disability, and ethnicity, and children's identity should not be defined by any one aspect and children should not suffer discrimination on the basis of identity. In addition, everything done within the framework of the project should be based on the evaluation of the best interests of children and on promoting the survival and development of the child. All decisions regarding children should always take their opinions into account and every effort should be made to ensure that no groups are excluded or isolated. (Save the Children Alliance, 2005).

#### B. Children's rights-based approach during implementation of welfare projects

Even if a rights-based approach is applied when planning welfare projects, it does not mean that all children's rights-based approaches are satisfied. Therefore, it is important to examine the progress made through implementation and monitor whether it is approaching well based on children's rights. Through monitoring, it is possible to check whether the project is running smoothly and to check whether children's rights are respected in the actual process. Monitoring can be confirmed through methods such as participant surveys and feedback, peer evaluation, and satisfaction surveys. However, even these methods must start by considering whether children's rights are being violated. It is also important to monitor for any discrimination unintentionally hidden in the course of project implementation.

Until now, based on a client-centered practice, we have carried out projects through the strength perspective, family-centered, and efficient resource utilization. Each approach involves its own underlying theory and technique. Like these, rights-based approach is also a method of approach, which can be flexibly applied depending on the situation and context. The checklist for monitoring

the process of implementing welfare projects based on the core elements presented above is as follows. After monitoring using the checklist, it is necessary to learn the team approach to find the improvement points indicated by each result together and to build a better process.

#### C. Children's rights-based approach during evaluation of welfare projects

Evaluation of welfare projects is a comprehensive and objective analysis of the value and importance gained through project implementation and the changes that have occurred to the participants. If proper monitoring was carried out, it will help achieve the most maximal performance. The evaluation based on children's rights should evaluate not only the results of the project, but also whether the principles and core elements have been properly applied in all stages of planning and implementation of the project. Evaluating the results and the process together contributes to strengthening the accountability of the implementing institution and improving the effectiveness of the project. Lessons learned from evaluation can reduce trial and error in future projects and improve the quality of projects.