

ENACTING CHILD POLICY: Where lies the burden of proof?

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UNICEF Canada

- **UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.**
- **UNICEF is guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards.**
- **UNICEF is the only organization named in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as a source of expertise for governments.**

Two Fundamental Considerations

- **Governments have the primary duty to formulate public policy that gives priority to children's best interests.**
- **The use of Child Impact Assessments will improve public policy and contribute to better outcomes for children.**



Government's Responsibilities under Convention on the Rights of the Child

- **Services and benefits**
- **Legislation**
- **Governance** (including:)
 - Coordination for children
 - Independent Children's Ombudspersons
 - Child Impact Assessment



Child Impact Assessments – What Should Be Assessed?

Children's rights impact assessments: What should be assessed?



Other Impact Assessment Processes

Impact Assessments have been characterized as:

“the process of identifying the consequences of a current or proposed action.”

Other Types of Impact Assessments:

- Regulatory Impact Assessments
- Environmental Impact Assessments
- Gender Impact Assessments
- Health Impact Assessments

Why Focus on Children?

- **Children constitute a significant segment of the population.**
- **Childhood is a window or a loss of opportunity.**
- **Children as the yardstick for the long-term success of economic and social policy.**

Commissioning Child Impact Assessments

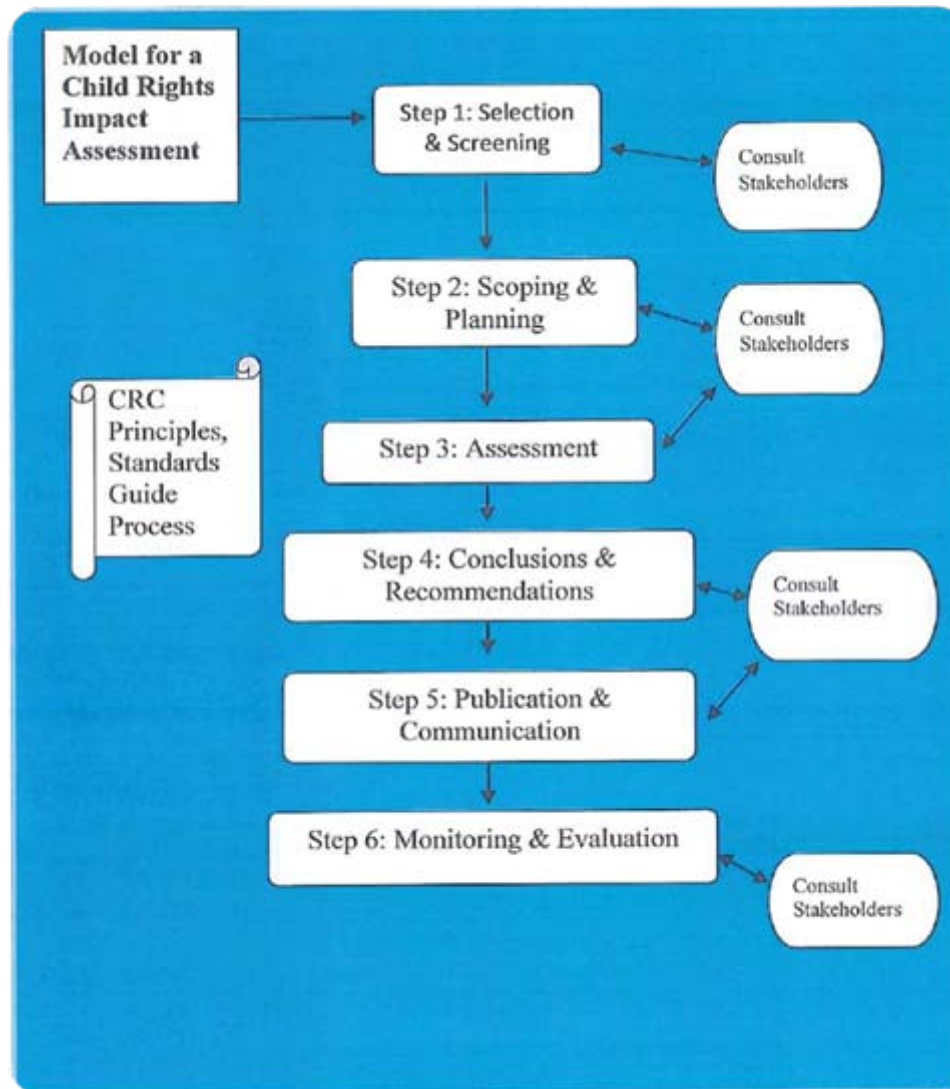
- **Government/departments**
- **Parliamentarians**
- **Mayors**
- **Children's Ombudspersons, Advocates or Commissioners**
- **Institutions and organizations**
- **Private Sector**



Uses of Child Impact Assessments

- **Systematically review proposed policy and legislation (Scotland, UK, and Sweden).**
- **Determine how specific measures may affect children (USA).**
- **Build a children's perspective into local planning (Sweden, Edmonton, Finland and New Zealand).**

A Good Practice Model



Guiding Principles of Child Impact Assessments

The **best interests of the child**: a primary consideration in decisions by public or private institutions, courts of law, legislative bodies and administrative authorities (article 3(1)).

Non-discrimination: every child should have all of his or her rights provided for and protected, without exclusion or restriction (article 2).

The **views of the children** must be sought and given due weight in all matters affecting them (article 12).

The state must ensure, to the maximum extent possible, the **right to life, survival and development of the child** (article 6).

Benefits of Child Impact Assessments

- **Visibility for children**
- **Balanced interests**
- **Improving policy**
- **Transparency and accountability**
- **Considering longer-term & inter-generational effects**
- **Deepening the analysis**
- **Reaching the most vulnerable**
- **Improving cross-departmental coordination**
- **‘Doing no harm’**

Child Impact Assessments in Practice

“Child Impact Assessments are a tool for translating the Convention and the child’s best interests into practice in a concrete structured manner.”

Ministry of Health and Social Affairs
and Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Sweden (2001)



Benefits of More Rigorous Child Impact Assessments

- **Improve child-related governance decisions and make them more defensible.**
- **Remind governments of their primary duty to protect and promote children's rights.**
- **Improve the capacity for others to make responsible decisions affecting children.**
- **Contribute to meeting Canada's international obligations.**

Contact Information

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Thank You

