



Developing a children's rights approach to fundraising with children in primary schools and the ethics of cultivating philanthropic citizenship

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Many successful fundraising initiatives involve children in primary schools. However, children's engagement in fundraising is often passive, without an actual awareness of their choices.

To what extent can we perceive this passive engagement as ethical? Is this approach able to foster long-term engagement and, in the end, an effective children's philanthropic citizenship (CPC)? If not, how can CPC be encouraged and developed by NPOs and schools?

A change in fundraising initiatives that involve primary schools should be considered and addressed by the relevant stakeholders. Children, as donors, should have an enshrined right to critically engage in the subject of the initiatives, extend their participation beyond financial aid, and execute their philanthropic citizenship rights. Fundraising practices should therefore be co-constructed by NPOs, schools and children and CPC should be embedded as part of the overall philanthropic education in schools.

[#fundraising](#) [#childsrights](#) [#ethics](#) [#children](#) [#philanthropy](#) [#primary schools](#)

Background & Context



- Whilst schools and pupil involvement in fundraising campaigns is a useful way to develop an early philanthropic approach, **children's involvement in charitable giving via schools often shows a passive, tokenistic approach**. Encouraging giving as a transactional act based on external rewards does not provoke real social change.
- Giving and social action programmes within schools can positively increase the children's propensity to give and, in the end, their pro-social behaviour.
- **Low engagement** of children in debates about how ideas and values are intertwined with moral values **does not adequately engage** them in giving as a way to pursue a more socially aware and less oppressive society.
- **Fundraisers and fundraising organisations should emphasise their ethical duty to critically engage children to support their philanthropic citizenship rather than just collecting money.**

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Take aways & Learnings



- From a children's rights perspective, the way to foster philanthropic citizenship should extend their support beyond a mere financial focus: **fundraisers should have an ethical duty to critically engage children in "moral justification for moral intervention that justifies fundraising"**.
- It is essential to offer children the opportunity to **(1) investigate potential structural problems which create inequality, (2) complex decision-making related to the distribution and (3) the impact of fundraised money**. With a focus on a broad perspective: policy and/or government action, for example, rather than philanthropy as the sole solution to societal problems.
- To properly engage children in fundraising, fundraising in schools should be a co-creation process between the fundraising charity, the school/teachers and the children themselves**. Through this approach, fundraising becomes a conscious vehicle to expand the context and address charitable issues.
- Fundraising organizations should **provide a framework to facilitate schools in critically engaging children around the motive behind the need for help** and the alternative ways it can be tackled beyond the mere engagement in collecting money for the cause itself.
- Schools should hold an ethical responsibility to actively involve children as co-decision makers in the entire fundraising process**, making them able to consider the ethical and moral aspects of philanthropy before making decisions about giving.

Ethical condition	Practice
It promotes, sustains, protects or maintains public trust, and unethical when it damages these things	NO – Children’s passive participation damages trust.
It gives priority to the donor’s wants, needs, and wishes provided that this maximises sustainable income for the non-profit	NO – Encouraging giving as a transactional act may increase income but is unlikely to foster CPC.
It gives priority to the donor’s wants, needs, desires and wishes	NO – Without active knowledge and engagement in decision-making and understanding why they are giving, wants, needs and wishes are ignored. Children are not treated as ‘donor’.
It brings meaning to a donor’s philanthropy	NO – Children do not have a say in philanthropic decision-making, thus not fostering CPC.
It balances the duty of fundraisers to ask for support with the relevant rights of donors for mutually beneficial outcomes	NO – Although it seems plausible that current fundraising practices are ethical by this reasoning, we argue that children’s rights are not met.

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