LINKING CHILD RIGHTS AND THE SDGS

COMMITTING TO CHILD RIGHTS ON THE OCCASION OF THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CRC

The year 2019 is a seminal year for both the *Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development* and the *Child Rights’ Agenda*. In a year of stock-taking and review, the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) will meet twice for the first time since the adoption of the SDGs: 1) during its regular annual meeting under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in July, and 2) for the first time at the General Assembly in September, which occurs every four years. At the July HLPF, the overarching theme will be *Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*. The Goals under special review are highly relevant to the lives of children and young people, as they explore quality education, youth employment, migration, inequalities, climate change, and violence against children, among other topics.

The year 2019 also marks the 30th anniversary of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*, the most widely ratified human rights treaty in existence. *The SDGs and CRC go hand in hand*. While the CRC highlights the historic and indispensable international standards for ensuring all activities -- including sustainable development efforts -- align with the rights of every child, the SDGs articulate a modern vision for social, economic and environmental progress that can be achieved when all people, including all children, have their rights recognized and realized. In sum, children’s rights cannot be realized without the successful implementation of the SDGs and vice versa. To that end, the anniversary of the Convention is a time for governments to reflect on and recommit to child rights as major part of their SDG implementation efforts.

**KEY ASKS**

UNICEF encourages countries participating in a voluntary national review during the 2019 HLPF to include the following aspects in their respective reports:

1. **Reaffirm their commitment to the CRC** as a cornerstone of their national SDG implementation efforts.
2. **Report on progress and challenges on national action to protect, respect and fulfil children’s rights.**
3. **Take national action on the 30th anniversary of the CRC.** This could include, for example: organizing a multi-stakeholder national summit or event on children’s rights with the participation of children and adolescents; convening a parliamentary dialog/debate on linking child rights and the SDGs; governments announcing new and/or improved laws, policies or programmes that support the fulfillment of child rights and support child well-being; government leaders making public statements on the importance of child rights and how they are committing to the fulfillment of the CRC over the next 30 years.
4. Present how **national development plans, policies and reports integrate and implement children’s rights** as articulated in the CRC.

**MONITORING THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH**

All SDGs are relevant to the fulfillment of the rights of children, not only those which explicitly reference children. UNICEF conducted a detailed *mapping of the articles of the CRC to the SDGs goals and targets*, illustrating the many linkages and synergies between the two frameworks. That being said, UNICEF has identified 44 indicators out of a total of 232 in the global SDG monitoring framework, that most directly concern children. The *quality and availability of data against those indicators remains a significant challenge*. A first step in the realization of child rights is to know who these children are, where they live and the challenges they face. UNICEF encourages Governments to:

- **Ensure that national SDG monitoring frameworks includes child-focused indicators.** Unless the national SDG monitoring framework contains child-focused indicators, the issues around child development and well-being might get lost in policy discussions. Thus, it is essential that the national SDG monitoring and indicator framework is reviewed and updated to include child-focused indicators. As a starting point, the 44 indicators in the global monitoring framework can be used to guide the review and possible updating of both national SDG monitoring framework.
- **Strengthen national capacity to improve the collection, dissemination and use of high-quality, comprehensive and up-to-date disaggregated data** to adequately monitor and report on progress for all children.
- **Leverage existing national monitoring and reporting mechanisms for reporting on the CRC** and other relevant human rights obligations to reflect progress on child rights within the context of the SDGs (the *mapping* can assist).
- Use statistical data from a variety of sources in assessing SDG progress, including censuses, sample surveys and administrative records, as well as perception data collected through participatory monitoring activities.
- Measure child poverty in all its dimensions, and monitoring progress towards ‘ending child poverty in all its forms’, as a universal and cross-cutting issue that can help to reinforce the indivisibility of the SDGs and avoid compartmentalization.

**INVESTING IN CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH**

Delivering on the promises articulated in the CRC and prioritizing the education, protection, health and well-being of children constitutes the best and most robust investment we can make to fulfill the promise of Agenda 2030 – for children and young people themselves and for peace, human security and sustainable development. UNICEF encourages Governments to:

**Improve reporting on expenditures and programmes that have direct and indirect impacts on child and adolescent well-being.** Relevant approaches include Public Expenditure Reviews (PERs) with a focus on children and child-focused areas such as immunization or nutrition programmes, child-spending markers and taxonomies, as well as established reporting practices on child-focused allocations under the CRC.

**Monitor and increase investments on new child- and adolescent-focused SDG priorities** that are of a cross-cutting nature but sit less easily within traditional sectoral budgets. Interventions in areas like child protection, gender equality, adolescent development, nutrition and early childhood development cut across sectors and are not always classified under sectoral budgets, which often results in their omission.

**Adopt principles of results-based reporting to spending on children and adolescents, with a particular focus on equity and effectiveness, including gender equality.** Examples include tracking of spending that explicitly addresses geographic disparities of services for children and adolescents (both quality and access), as well as inequities among different population groups and gender in service provision or other matters.

**Carry out systematic equity gap analyses** to understand better which children and where progress for children are lagging and determine the underlying causes and bottlenecks.

**INCLUDING CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH**

The CRC asserts that children have the right to have their voices heard in all matters that affect their lives. It is, therefore, their right to learn about and engage in achieving the SDGs, both in claiming their rights now, as children, as well as preparing themselves to take on more complex responsibilities as they grow older. UNICEF encourages Governments to involve children and adolescents in learning about and taking action on the SDGs through participatory means:

- **The process for preparing the national review should directly involve children and adolescent girls and boys, especially the most marginalized or excluded.** For example, through consultations (on and/or offline), surveys, focus group discussions, etc. UNICEF together with civil society, child-focused organizations and other partners could support the government in that process. The results of these efforts as well as the methods employed should be described in the report, including the number of young people involved in the process.

- **Children and adolescents should be made aware of the SDGs through the use of child-friendly and interactive education and learning materials.** To inspire action and initiate meaningful consultation, first children must become aware of sustainable development issues and how the goals relate to their daily lives and communities. Materials such as those created as part of the World’s Largest Lesson and Comics Uniting Nations partnerships can help bring the SDGs to young people and inspire their creativity and action on the Goals.

- **Awareness-raising and participation should be seen as part of a continuum to regularly, meaningfully and consistently engage children, adolescents and young people as agents of change to influence behaviors and social norms amongst themselves, their households and their communities.** This goes beyond engagement just for the purposes of reporting periods, but rather creating standing mechanisms and spaces for young people to engage and have their perspectives heard in decision and policy-making processes as well as across media and communications channels for the purpose of solidifying long-term positive changes in behaviors and social norms.

For more information, please visit: [http://www.unicef.org/crc](http://www.unicef.org/crc)