The mandate for governments to report on building this awareness can be specifically found in targets 4.7 and 12.8 of Agenda 2030 which suggest:

**4.7:** By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.

**12.8:** By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.

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**INCLUDING CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH**

**IMPROVING SDG AWARENESS-BUILDING AND PARTICIPATION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE**

To foster inclusion as well as ownership of the principles in the SDGs, UNICEF encourages national partners to involve children in the development of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) but also more broadly in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Just as people’s participation was a hallmark of the SDG negotiations — infusing increased ambition and legitimacy into that process — people’s participation must continue and be strengthened for SDG implementation in all countries. Thus, a key aspect of SDG monitoring, follow-up and review will be to foster awareness of the SDGs among the public as well as encouraging their active participation in these processes – from the community, national, regional and global level, serving as the “people’s reality check” on if the SDGs are delivering on their promises on the ground (or not).

**THE PROCESS FOR PREPARING THE NATIONAL REVIEW SHOULD DIRECTLY INVOLVE CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS.**

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. Child, adolescent and youth participation should be meaningful. This means providing them with the space (a safe and inclusive space to express their views), the voice (appropriate information and facilitation for the expression of young people’s views) and the audience (mechanisms to ensure that their views are taken into due consideration). When participation is meaningful, young people’s opinions have an influence, and they feel more empowered to make a change.

The results of this effort as well as the methods employed should be described in the national review report, including the number of children, adolescents and youth involved in the process. A deliberate effort should be done to meaningfully engage young people that are marginalized or excluded (e.g. children with disabilities, street children, children living in poverty, ethnic/minority children, refugee or migrant children etc.). Managers should allocate more time, resources and skilled facilitation to ensure inclusive, safe and meaningful participation for the most marginalized and excluded. Further, the reporting back on how children, adolescents and youth have been involved in the process could be part of a special report or dedicated chapter of the VNR. For example, in 2017 Slovenia had a special report within their VNR entitled: Youth in Slovenia in the context of the 2030 Agenda, which was produced by the National Youth Council of Slovenia based on a survey that the youth group conducted with their peers across the country. This should be considered an example of good practice.

Perception data collected through participatory monitoring activities are an essential “reality check” and useful complement to official data and statistics. Perception data is collected directly from people/constituencies and aims to understand their personal views/perceptions on key topics (e.g. healthcare, education). Moreover, perception data polls/surveys differ from other instruments like traditional household surveys in that the main motivation is to uncover what people think and solicit their views on specific issues. These channels allow people who participate in such activities to share whether or not the SDGs are resulting in positive changes to their lives, schools, communities, etc. and can help to better inform governments and other key decision-makers on the views and ideas of their constituencies. Although not a replacement for official data, collection and analysis of perception data can help governments take more informed, efficient and effective decisions and also to help fill data gaps, where official statistics are not available.

**CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH SHOULD BE MADE AWARE OF THE SDGS THROUGH CHILD-FRIENDLY EDUCATION AND LEARNING MATERIALS.**

The mandate for governments to report on building this awareness can be specifically found in targets 4.7 and 12.8 of Agenda 2030 which suggest:
Government Leaders, -- including the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs and the former (71st) President of the UN General Assembly (PGA) have called on all Heads of Government for the SDGs to be taught to children in schools.

Achieving the SDGs rely on behavior changes from a systems scale to an individual scale. When taught about the issues in the SDGs, children and youth are often some of the most effective behavior and norm changers in households, communities and societies -- on issues ranging from ending stigma and discrimination to recycling and reducing waste. Children and young people should be educated and engaged on issues in the SDGs with the aim of deepening their understanding of how the goals relate to their daily lives and what actions they can take to help make a difference.

UNICEF can support this effort, particularly due to our existing work in this space and creating child-friendly education and entertainment materials through our foundational partnerships on the World’s Largest Lesson² and Comics Uniting Nations³.

IMPLEMENTATION IN ACTION: WORLD LARGEST LESSON ACTIVATES A COMMUNITY IN RURAL CAMEROON

In 2015, UNICEF partnered with Project Everyone to launch the World’s Largest Lesson (WLL), a global initiative aimed at bringing the SDGs to the classroom through lesson plans, videos, comics and other creative content – available freely and in a multitude of languages for educators to download, use or adapt for their classrooms.

The inspiration behind the WLL is that the SDGs must be brought down to local realities if they are to succeed in changing the world for the better by 2030. Children, youth, families and communities must internalize how the issues represented by the SDGs affect their own daily lives and environments, whether that be on improving health and nutrition; the importance of early learning and quality education; fostering more peaceful communities where children live free from violence; or establishing more sustainable approaches to use and preservation of natural resources. When that understanding happens, people of all ages can be inspired to take action, resulting in sustained progress on these goals and shifts in social norms and behaviors in the long-term.

A particularly inspiring example of WLL in practice comes from Cameroon, where UNICEF together with the Government implemented a special project on food production. Here, a teacher from the capital city of Yaounde taught rural, Baka (Pygmee) children how to sustainably increase food production by making compost. This has turned out to be a life-changing lesson for not only the students but their families, inspiring more sustainable farming practices in the rainforest community. As the video produced by UNICEF Cameroon notes, “since the lesson took place, it was reported that more than half of the families in the village started using for the first-time natural compost to fertilize their crops. When school children become agents of change, a simple lesson can change the life of a community.” See the inspiring story here⁵.

AWARENESS OF THE ISSUES AND PARTICIPATION IN MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESSES SHOULD BE PART OF A CONTINUUM TO REGULARLY, MEANINGFULLY AND CONSISTENTLY ENGAGE CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH AS AGENTS OF CHANGE TO INFLUENCE BEHAVIORS AND SOCIAL NORMS AMONGST THEMSELVES, THEIR HOUSEHOLDS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES.

People’s feedback collected through participatory monitoring activities can assist in identifying left behind groups, barriers, and bottlenecks. Acting on these perspectives strengthens policy response and service delivery. Children and young people should be periodically consulted through tools that help gather and act on the perspectives of young citizens.

This participatory monitoring approach goes beyond engagement just for the purposes of reporting periods, but rather systematizing the engagement of young people in a variety of ways and across media and communications channels, including for example: digital platforms (including U-Report), child and youth councils, participatory theatre, intergenerational community dialogues, community & children’s radio, participatory video, school clubs, TV Edu-tainment and child-participatory research.

WORLD CHILDREN’S DAY⁴ (20 NOVEMBER) IS A DAY THAT GOVERNMENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS CAN CELEBRATE CHILD PARTICIPATION AND MAKE COMMITMENTS TO TAKE FURTHER ACTION.

The 20th of November is the anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified human rights treaty in existence. While children and adolescents are taking action on the SDGs throughout the year in their lives, schools and communities, the occasion of World Children’s Day is a key annual opportunity to amplify their voices; take stock of progress; and for governments, the private sector, civil society, the UN System and others to make new commitments towards fulfilling the rights of every child and meaningfully engaging children as global citizens and positive agents of change.

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¹ Youth in Slovenia in the context of the 2030 Agenda: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16313Slovenia.pdf
² World’s Largest Lesson: http://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/
³ Comics Uniting Nations: http://www.comicsunitingnations.org/
⁴ World Children’s Day: https://www.unicef.org/world-childrens-day/
⁵ World’s Largest Lesson in Cameroon: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=foDt0maT69E