Just as people’s participation was a hallmark of the SDG negotiations’ process – 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 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).

UNICEF encourages governments to meaningfully engage children and adolescents in all aspects of implementation the SDGs and can assist governments in this endeavor:

The process for preparing the national review should directly involve children and adolescent girls and boys
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 this effort as well as the methods employed should be described in the national review report including the number of children and adolescent girls and boys involved in the process
Children and adolescent girls and boys that are marginalized or excluded (e.g. children with disabilities, street children, children living in poverty, ethnic/minority children etc.) should be specifically targeted for their meaningful and ongoing participation. Further, the reporting back on how children and adolescents 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 to share whether or not the SDGs are actually 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 replace 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 and adolescents should be made aware of the SDGs through the use of 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 say:

**Target 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.

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

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 Lesson\(^1\) and Comics Uniting Nations.\(^2\)
Awareness of the issues and participation in monitoring and accountability processes 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 systematizing the engagement of young people in a variety of ways and across media and communications channels for the purpose of long-term positive changes in behaviors and social norms.

World Children’s Day³ (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.

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 behaviours 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 (Pygmy) 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 here."³

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1 World’s Largest Lesson: http://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/
2 Comics Uniting Nations: http://www.comicsunitingnations.org/
3 World Children’s Day: https://www.unicef.org/world-childrens-day/
4 World’s Largest Lesson in Cameroon: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=foDt0maT69E