



KEY ASKS

2023 • SDG National Reviews

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FULFILLING ALL RIGHTS OF EVERY CHILD -- LINKING CHILD RIGHTS & THE SDGS

The ongoing crisis of the global COVID-19 pandemic threatens to roll back years of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also risks becoming a human rights crisis and a child rights crisis as we have seen how the pandemic has exposed long-standing, deep-seated, systemic human rights and child rights violations and how it has and will continue to exacerbate these pre-existing violations, as well as create new ones, especially for those who are already disadvantaged such as children from marginalized or minority groups, or children with disabilities. More than ever, fault lines have been exposed – between those who have access to health care, water, sanitation, nutrition, information, and economic and social protections and those who do not. While children may not be the face of the crisis now, they might fast become it, if **decision-makers do not act swiftly and decisively to uphold their child rights obligations in immediate and long-term COVID-19 response.**

The [Convention on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\)](#) – the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history – sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of all children within a State’s jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind. It is the most complete statement of children’s rights ever produced. At the same time, we are less than 10 years away from the deadline set for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be reached. The SDGs -- which are grounded explicitly in human rights and call for inclusive economic, social, and environmental progress for all people and the planet – are the blueprint for creating the world that all of us need, and that children are demanding, especially in the face of COVID-19 today and in building resilience to future shocks, especially for the most marginalized and vulnerable children.¹

The realization of child rights and of the SDGs are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing with all 35 explicitly child-related indicators² across the 17 SDGs being linked to articles under the CRC. The CRC as a legally binding treaty puts forth all the rights that Governments must respect, protect, and fulfil for all children under their jurisdiction, while the SDGs are a universal, timebound call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030, with the pledge of leaving no one behind at its core. The two frameworks have a strong potential for reinforcing each other. This means that (i) leaving no child behind means all rights for all children; (ii) children exercise their right to express their views, participate and be heard; (iii) assessing the impact of policies and actions on the rights of children and take decisions in their best interests; and (iv) monitoring compliance and ensuring accountability through national human rights institutions and mechanisms.

2020 marked the commencement of the “Decade of Action” to accelerate progress on the SDGs between 2020 and 2030. This linkage between the realization of child rights and the successful achievement of the SDGs, therefore, takes on further and increased importance as the world moves towards achieving the SDGs over the coming decade. UNICEF encourages countries participating in a Voluntary National Review (VNR) during the 2023 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) to include the following aspects in their respective reports:



KEY ASKS

1. **Reaffirm Government commitment to accelerating implementation of the CRC** as a cornerstone of national SDG implementation and attainment efforts. This can and should include explicit commitments made by leaders at the national and subnational levels (e.g., parliamentarians, mayors, etc).

¹ [UN Secretary General’s Call to Action for Human Rights](#)

² See https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/SDG-briefing-note-1_national-and-global-monitoring.pdf. Some of the indicators contain multiple components. When such components are viewed separately, the number of indicators becomes 44.

2. **Provide explicit and comprehensive reporting on the situation of children** and the actions taken by the Government towards the realization of child rights in the **Government's 2023 SDG VNR Report**, as well as in other reporting mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), **making use of the most recent reports Prepared by the State for treaty bodies, particularly the CRC.**
3. **Safeguard and expand social spending that contributes to the realization of child rights.** The current COVID-19 crisis has greatly impacted children and it is crucial to safeguard social spending on health, education, social protection, and other social sectors. Economic and fiscal policies should be embarked upon to protect the decades of investments in social sectors and to mitigate the consequences of the current crisis. Investment on children should always be protected, during and after the COVID-19 crisis.
4. **Conduct meaningful and inclusive consultations with children and youth** as part of the Government's 2023 VNR Report and include specific and actional recommendations from those consultations in said report. A young representative of the consultation with children and youth should also be part of the Government's official delegation to the 2023 High-level Political Forum (HLPF) where the main findings of the report are presented at the United Nations.
5. **Expand child, adolescent and youth awareness of child rights and the SDGs** through the use of CRC- and SDG-related education materials in schools and beyond.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DISAGGREGATED DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND USE

All SDGs are relevant to the fulfilment 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 targets³, illustrating the many linkages and synergies between the two frameworks. UNICEF has identified [44 indicators out of a total of 232 in the global SDG monitoring framework, that most directly concern children](#). On the positive, there has been a notable increase in data coverage over the last few years, however, significant challenges remain and especially in trying to collect data to best understand the impact the COVID-19 crisis has had on children. A first step in the realization of child rights is to know who these children are, where they live and the challenges they face. Therefore, we encourage Governments to:

- **Ensure that national SDG monitoring frameworks include 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 guide the review and possible updating of the 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 including those most vulnerable and left behind.
- **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). Greater synergies with the CRC reporting process can help make children more visible in SDG implementation and monitoring.
- **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.

SOCIAL SPENDING AND PROGRESS ON RESULTS FOR CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

Delivering on the obligations articulated in the CRC and prioritizing spending on the education, protection, and health of children constitutes the **best** and **most robust** investment we can make to fulfil 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 and efficiency 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 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

³ <https://www.unicef.org/media/60231/file>

For more information, visit: <https://www.unicef.org/sdgs>

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 rights and results-based reporting to spending on children and adolescents, with a particular focus on addressing inequalities and discriminations, including against girls and women, and ensuring efficiency or effectiveness?

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 are not being reached and where progress for children is lagging and determine the underlying causes and bottlenecks.

AWARENESS BUILDING & MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

The CRC asserts that children have the right to have their voices heard in all matters that affect their lives, as well as the right to information and to education, including on their rights. It is, therefore, their right to learn about their rights as a child and to engage in learning about and taking action on the SDGs.

While the COVID-19 pandemic now precludes the participation of children in-person, digital platforms and online platforms allow for the participation of children from contexts and areas that may have been not previously possible. A meaningful, informed, and safe representation of children from the most marginalised, under-served and hard-to-reach contexts is in itself a critical component of the 'Leave No One Behind' principle. In all child participation processes, the highest standards of child safe-guarding and protection policies and practices need to be applied, and the required technical capacities for this be utilised, including through partnership with the relevant civil society partners.

Against this background, UNICEF encourages Governments to involve children and adolescents in learning about their rights and the SDGs through participatory means:

The process for preparing the 2023 voluntary 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 and in line with safety measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19), surveys or polls (e.g., [U-Report](#)), 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 VNR report, including the number of young people involved in the process.

Children and adolescents should be made aware of their rights and the SDGs using child-friendly and interactive education and learning materials. To inspire action and initiate meaningful consultation, children must become aware of both their rights, and the relationship of those rights to their daily lives, communities, and the SDGs. UNICEF's and Project Everyone's global campaign to increase SDG awareness and action among young people – the World's Largest Lesson – [has developed a lesson plan for teaching children about the relationship between fulfilment of child rights and the SDGs](#). Materials such as these and other [child-friendly CRC materials](#)⁴ can help bring awareness of child rights and the SDGs to young people and inspire their creativity and action on the Global Goals.

Awareness-raising and participation should be seen as part of **a continuum to engage children, adolescents, and young people regularly, meaningfully, and consistently as agents of change to influence behaviours 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 behaviours and social norms. [UNICEF's Youth Activate Talk Methodology](#) is also a platform from children to express their ideas on the SDGs through a variety of mediums.

⁴ [We All Have Rights Video for 3-6 years-old](#)
For more information, visit: <https://www.unicef.org/sdgs>