



KEY ASKS

2023 • SDG National Reviews

SDG AWARENESS BUILDING & MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



KEY ASKS

Just as a *whole-of-society approach* was a hallmark of the SDG negotiations' process -- infusing increased ambition and legitimacy into that process -- participation from children and young people must continue and be strengthened for SDG implementation in all countries. A key aspect of monitoring, follow-up, and review is **fostering awareness of the SDGs** and **encouraging meaningful participation** at local, national, regional, and global level among the public particularly of children and young people as the next generation.

1. With the ongoing global polycrisis including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, Ukraine and economic downturns - recovery plans, policies and responses must be child-sensitive and child-inclusive.

Lockdown measures, school closures and degradation of routine healthcare services such as vaccination campaigns are leaving long-term and devastating impact on children's rights, safety, and well-being. In designing and implementing programmes to build back better and accelerate progress on the SDGs, children must be consulted and involved to ensure these interventions best meet their needs. UNICEF supported children and young people all around the world to fight misinformation and to create a sense of community and solidarity via digital tools. For example, in Brazil, young '[digital firefighters](#)' spread compelling and accurate messages to fight misinformation and in Kazakhstan, 1,500 young people joined an [online volunteering programme](#) that has reached around 500,000 people with information on mental health, ending violence against children and online learning.

With 2023 as the mid-point to the 2030 goals, children and young people are expressing views/opinions around "building back better" and supporting reimagining the future and designing programmes, policies and innovations needed to get the world "back on track" to meet the SDGs. The solutions needed to achieve the SDGs are the same ones needed to mitigate the effects of the polycrisis and build a fairer, greener, and safer world for the future. "Nothing for me, without me".

2. The process for preparing the national review should directly involve children and young people.

The COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to growing inequalities -- both between and within countries -- making it more urgent than ever to take additional measures to include children and young people in the national review process. UNICEF together with civil society, child-focused organizations and other partners supports governments to bring child and youth participation into VNRs through consultations (online and/or in-person), surveys, focus group discussions, etc. **Child and young people's participation must 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). Meaningful participation allows young people's opinions to have an influence, and they feel more empowered to make a change. For example, in Uruguay, UNICEF is facilitating a conversation between students, academia, and government representatives [on the future of education](#) (*link in Spanish*).

The results of these participatory efforts, as well as the methods employed, should be described in the Voluntary National review (VNR), including the number of children and young people involved. Given growing inequities, "leaving no one behind" will require specific outreach and engagement of young people who are marginalized or excluded (e.g., children with disabilities, children living on the streets, children without parental care, children living in poverty, children from ethnic minorities, 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 -- as they will otherwise continue to remain silent and unreached. Special reports or a dedicated chapter of the VNR are a good practice that brings young peoples' voices directly to the fore. 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 young people's group conducted with their peers across the country.

3. Children and young people 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. Government Leaders have called for the SDGs to be taught to children in schools. UNICEF can support this effort through ongoing platforms such as the [World's Largest Lesson](#) and [Voices of Youth](#). [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. Awareness raising and participation in monitoring processes should be seen as part of a continuum to engage children and young people regularly, meaningfully and consistently as agents of change.

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, including for example: digital platforms, participatory theatre, intergenerational community dialogues, community & children's radio, participatory videos, school clubs, TV edutainment, and child-participatory research. Another tool developed by UNICEF [U-Report](#) which can be used to reach out to young people on their views and concerns on key issues via mobile phones and social media platforms, with summary reports of results being made available to government leaders and other key decision-makers.

5. World Children's Day is a day that Governments and other stakeholders can celebrate child rights and participation and make commitments to take further action.

The realization of child rights and the successful implementation of the SDGs are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing. Every year on 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, World Children's Day is a key moment to amplify their voices and take stock of progress. For governments, the private sector, civil society, and the UN System, this is an opportunity to make new commitments for fulfilling the rights of every child and meaningfully engaging children and young people.



Implementation in Action: World Largest Lesson teaches over 500,000 young Nigerians about the SDGs in a single week

Since 2015, UNICEF has partnered with Project Everyone on 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, young people, families, and communities must internalize how the issues represented by the SDGs affect their own daily lives and environments. 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.

One of the most effective means for children to learn about these issues is through peer-to-peer learning. In October 2019, this was put into practice to great effect in Nigeria, where over 2,500 youth volunteers taught the WLL across the country, reaching over 500,000 young Nigerians in a single week. UNICEF, UNESCO, Project Everyone and a host of local NGOs are now working with the Nigerian Government to reach millions of more children over the coming months and years, while also discussing options for the integration of SDG-focused education into school curricula.

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

ⁱ Youth in Slovenia in the context of the 2030 Agenda: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16313Slovenia.pdf>