



#EVERYCHILD 2030

Key Asks and Principles for 2018 National Review Activities

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

At the 2018 High Level Political Forum (HLPF), the overarching theme will be *Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies*. Additionally Goal 12, Responsible Consumption and Production, is one of the six goals being examined in depth at the HLPF in 2018.

SDG 12 pertains to children two-fold: first, unsustainable and unsafe consumption and production patterns lead to toxic waste and limited resources which disproportionately harms children's health, development and environments. Second, decades of evidence shows that widespread changes in positive societal behavior often begin with children becoming aware of the problems they observe in their own communities. This applies to sustainable consumption patterns where for instance, recycling and reducing the use of plastics has gained support due to the efforts and involvement of children in campaigns.

Children and youth should be both protected from unsafe practices and engaged in sustainability-focused awareness and action. UNICEF encourages the following [SDG 12 Targets and Indicators](#) to be monitored and disaggregated wherever possible, as they address priority areas for children as underlined by the key messages below.

Improve food production, consumption and allocation to reduce food waste, better preserve the planet and provide for people, including children who disproportionately suffer from hunger.

12.3 By 2030, halve per capita **global food waste** at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses

Current production and consumption patterns are not only polluting resources, but impacting people's access. More food is produced than is consumed – or allocated to those in need. Of the 4 billion metric tonnes of food produced each year, one third is wasted.¹ Concurrently, 52 million children suffer from and 3 million children die from wasting, the life-threatening result of hunger.²

With both population growth and poverty eradication resulting in more people joining the middle class, demand for already constrained natural resources will reach the need of three planets worth of resources by 2050.³ Consumption patterns must be altered to better preserve the planet and provide for people.

Reduce the emissions of harmful pollutants to prevent and mitigate their effects on children.

12.4 By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound **management of chemicals and all wastes** throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on **human health** and the environment

12.5 By 2030, substantially **reduce waste** generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse

Emerging and alarming evidence shows the direct impact of chemicals and waste on children. The size of children's bodies and the developmental stage of their internal organs and systems make them far more vulnerable to health risks from pollution and toxins than the same exposure by adults.⁴ As children breathe, they take in more air per unit of body weight than adults, resulting in greater exposure to pathogens and pollutants. When children play on the ground, their potential intake of polluted soil and dust increases. They are more exposed to dietary sources of pollution because, compared to adults, they drink more water and eat more food in proportion to their body weight. If water contains residues of pesticides or other chemicals, for example, infants will receive more than double the dose taken in by an adult drinking the same water.⁵ Fossil fuels, waste water, and other pollutants reportedly have physical and mental effects on children especially. For instance, communities in close proximity to industrial areas report that children born healthy begin showing signs of mental and physical deterioration due to toxic wastewater.⁶ Polluted wastewater also damages farmland, depleting sources of food and income, therefore perpetuating poverty and hunger.

1 UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), 2011.

2 UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group. Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates, May 2017.

3 World Wildlife Fund, 2012.

4 UNICEF, May 2013. https://www.unicef.org/agenda2030/files/SD_children_FINAL.pdf

5 World Health Organization, 'Children's Environmental Health: Environmental risks', WHO, 2013, www.who.int/ceh/risks/en, accessed 23 August 2013.

6 [Changing Markets, June 2017](#).



#EVERYCHILD 2030

Key Asks and Principles for 2018 National Review Activities

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

Recognize the role businesses have in protecting child rights and role young people have in holding businesses to account.

12.6 Encourage **companies**, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle

While businesses have a significant role to protect children's rights and the environment, young people have also been on the forefront of holding businesses accountable for improved corporate social responsibility. As both current and future consumers, children and young people are increasingly shaping brands and the social and environmental roles that businesses thrive in. Thanks to younger generations entering the consumer market, over fifty-five percent of global online consumers across 60 countries are committed to positive social and environmental impact. [According to a study by Nielsen, Millennials report more interest to check consumer goods for sustainable labeling and willingness to pay extra for sustainable products](#).

Given that business practices across industries will need to shift in order to meet SDG criteria, there is opportunity for smart growth in corporate economic, social and environmental responsibility. The [Children's Rights and Business Principles](#) can aid in this endeavor. Of the ten principles, one specifically reads that all businesses should 'respect and support children's rights in relation to the environment and to land acquisition and use.' To aid the implementation of the principles, UNICEF has an accompanying set of tools including '[Children are Everyone's Business Workbook 2.0](#).'

Raise the awareness of children and young people to inspire positive action and sustainable lifestyles

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

12.8.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development (including climate change education) are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment

SDG 12 specifically calls for national governments to mainstream global citizenship education and sustainable development education in its education policies, curricula, teacher education and student assessment. UNICEF encourages governments to implement SDG-focused learning throughout schools in their countries and consult children and youth on their perceptions as to how to make systems and societies more sustainable. Existing materials specifically developed for this purpose such as the [World's Largest Lesson](#) are intended to bring the SDGs to the classroom through freely available, multilingual creative and educational content, including [specific content related to SDG 12](#).

Raising awareness can lead to positive action. Children are often the drivers of behavior change and social norm shifts because they share their learnings and concerns with their families, friends and community members. Both at the individual and community level, children and youth have taken innovative approaches towards sustainable production and consumption. In 2016, UNICEF convened an '[SDG Activate Talk: from Trashing to Treasuring](#)' to showcase what young people are doing in this space. Panelists included: [Lauren Singer](#), who after learning about the amount of waste we each produce, lives a 'zero waste lifestyle' fitting 4 years' worth of trash into a single 16-oz mason jar and Andrea Castro Burgeno, who designed and implemented '[GoodFill](#)' which rebrands discarded, yet still-edible, food to feed more and reduce landfill waste.

Whether in food, fashion, or other industries, young people have creative and passionate ideas as to how to promote a more sustainable lifestyle. The review of SDG 12 is an opportunity for governments and partners to report *with* children and youth on how to take solutions to scale.



7 UNICEF, August 2014. https://www.unicef.org/csr/css/Workbook_2.0_Second_Edition_29092014_LR.pdf