



2 ZERO HUNGER



unicef  for every child

## KEY ASKS FOR 2020 SDG VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

### ZERO HUNGER

The triple burden of malnutrition – undernutrition, hidden hunger and overweight – threatens the survival, growth and development of children, young people, economies and nations.

- **Stunting** is a clear sign that children in a country are not developing well, and is both a symptom of past deprivation and a predictor of future poverty.
- **Wasting** can be lethal for children, particularly in its most severe forms. Contrary to common belief, most wasted children around the world live in Asia and not in emergency settings.
- **Hidden hunger** harms children and women. Iron deficiency reduces children's ability to learn and iron deficiency anemia increases women's risk of death during or shortly after childbirth.
- **Child overweight** can lead to early onset of type-2 diabetes, stigmatization, low self-esteem and depression, and is a strong predictor of adult obesity, with serious health and economic consequences.

The greatest burden of all forms of malnutrition is shouldered by children and young people from the poorest and most marginalized communities, perpetuating poverty across generations.



### KEY ASKS

There are five key responses essential to improve children's nutrition that should be included in the development plans and agendas to put children's nutrition rights first.

1. **Empower families, children and young people to demand nutritious food:** Demand affects supply as food producers respond to consumers' behaviours and aspirations. When healthy options are affordable, convenient and desirable, parents and caregivers make better food choices for children. As children grow older, knowledge and information can make them powerful agents of change. Stimulating demand for nutritious food means not only educating consumers on the benefits of healthy diets, but also leveraging cultural and social aspirations.
2. **Drive food suppliers to do the right thing for children:** Demand alone is not enough. Healthy food must be available, affordable, safe and sustainable. Food producers and suppliers have a key role to play, and so do governments, which must create a level playing field for all producers and suppliers and help ensure that their actions align with children's best interests. Food systems are diverse, and so are the solutions, but all food production and consumption must become sustainable if we are to protect children's nutrition today and tomorrow.
3. **Build healthy food environments for all children:** The personal and external food environments are where children and their caregivers interact with the food system. As a starting point, breastfeeding needs to be protected so that from birth and for the first 6 months of life, infants have access to the best and most reliable source of nutrition. While the forces of supply and demand shape food environments, context-appropriate actions such as mandatory front-of-pack labelling and protection against exploitative marketing practices can help create food environments that are conducive to nutritious diets for children.
4. **Mobilize supportive systems to scale up nutrition results for every child:** As well as food systems, four other key systems must be mobilized to deliver nutrition services, improve nutrition practices and achieve nutrition outcomes at scale. The health, water and sanitation, education and social protection systems must all deliver interventions in a coordinated fashion. A systems approach to children's nutrition can help ensure that children and families have access to healthy diets and that children receive the nutrition services they need to develop to their full potential.
5. **Collect, analyse and use good-quality data and evidence regularly to guide action and track progress:** Lack of adequate data prevents governments from responding with effective policies, strategies and programmes. Accurate and timely data are needed to understand malnutrition, take coordinated, evidence-based action, and to hold all actors to account. Data collection methods and frequency must be transformed to expand what we know about the diets and nutrition of children, adolescents and women at every stage of life. Data systems must become responsive and a culture of data-sharing and transparency must be developed.



## MONITOR -- THE IMPORTANCE OF DISAGGREGATED DATA ON CHILDREN, FOOD AND NUTRITION

Like the challenge of malnutrition itself, data on child, adolescent, and maternal nutrition is evolving. The global dietary shift and the triple burden of malnutrition are increasing the need for more disaggregated data, while **technologies are opening opportunities for new understanding**. As addressing malnutrition becomes more holistic, with a **focus on systems that cut across sectors** and take into account food environments and consumer behavior, a wider range of actionable data is needed.

**Using data and evidence to shape decision-making for policies and programming** is crucial to understand dietary decisions that improve children's lives. There is a strong need for new tools to better understand children's diets. **Methods to measure food availability, access, affordability, demand and use at the household level** and the relationship between all these aspects is needed, along with tracking and understanding the nutrition transition as unhealthy diets become more prevalent worldwide.

The potential impact and effectiveness of data do not lie only in tracking more indicators or producing more surveys: the **analysis and use of existing data to drive policy advocacy and programme design and implementation** is vital. This effort must also be linked to the development of global and national targets for improving children's diets and feeding practices.



## INVEST -- SOCIAL SPENDING AND NUTRITION RESULTS AND IMPACT FOR CHILDREN AND WOMEN

To address the **multifaceted challenge of malnutrition**, a systems approach should be adopted to provide the multiple responses needed. The **systems approach** better captures the importance of the interactions and interconnections across different areas, such as food, health and education, and crystallizes a common purpose: better diets and better nutrition for children, adolescents and women. The food system must respond and provide better diets for children, adolescents and women. The health, water and sanitation, education and social protection systems are also fundamental in driving transformation, particularly in the personal and external food environments, and delivering the necessary services and promoting positive practices to support better diets and good nutrition outcomes. That approach puts the focus on multiple, interconnected determinants, and recognizes shared responsibility, and the need to **mobilize attention and resources** from a wider variety of societal and governmental institutions.

Further, **nutrition-sensitive social protection programmes** can mitigate the effects of poverty on the nutrition of children, adolescents and women. Social protection programmes are a powerful instrument to not only lift families and children out of poverty, but also to promote maternal and child nutrition. A range of interventions, such as conditional and unconditional cash transfers, food rations and school feeding, can all help limit the long-term effects of deprivation and provide communities with the means to access and afford nutritious food. **Cash-transfer programmes**, in particular, have proven benefits for the nutritional status and health outcomes of children. The large-scale interventions prove the importance of nutrition-sensitive social protection systems, helping countries not only to mitigate the effects of poverty, but also to strengthen families in their childcare role, which is a fundamental aspect of ensuring healthy eating habits and better child nutrition.



## ACTIVATE -- AWARENESS BUILDING & PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS & WOMEN

**Local communities and civil society organizations (CSOs)** can play a significant role in promoting better child nutrition, including by representing the voices of marginalized groups (such as smallholders, indigenous children, and women), holding government and business accountable, and directly serving the nutritional needs of their communities.

**The process for preparing the 2020 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), surveys or polls, 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.

**Provide spaces for children, adolescents and youth to learn about, discuss and take action on the SDGs, including Zero Hunger.** UNICEF can support this effort 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](#) and [Comics Uniting Nations](#). [UNICEF's Youth Activate Talk Methodology](#) is also a platform from children to express their ideas on the SDGs through a variety of medium.

Awareness-raising and participation should be seen as part of a **continuum to regularly, meaningfully and consistently engage children, adolescents and young people as knowledge producers and agents of change to influence decision-making processes and outcomes as well as behaviors 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 behaviors and social norms.

Research on meaningful youth engagement and participation suggest that adolescents need to feel a sense of belonging and trust of others, opportunities to socialize with peers, and to be involved in activities that they consider fun. Furthermore, focus should be put on improving the diets and lifestyle behaviors of adolescent girls and boys by engaging them through nutrition education and interpersonal communication on healthy diets and physical activity, including efforts to **involve adolescents for developing IT based solutions to improve nutrition**.