

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Monday, 21 June 2021 10:00 GMT +00:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	UNICEF Food System Dialogues with School-aged Children & Adolescents in Ghana
CONVENED BY	UNICEF- Ghana
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/43921/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Ghana

The outcomes from a Food Systems Summit Dialogue will be of use in developing the pathway to sustainable food systems within the locality in which they take place. They will be a valuable contribution to the national pathways and also of interest to the different workstreams preparing for the Summit: the Action Tracks, Scientific Groups and Champions as well as for other Dialogues.

1. PARTICIPATION

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

19

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

19 0-18

19-30

31-50

51-65

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

4 Male

15 Female

0 Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

Agriculture/crops

Fish and aquaculture

Livestock

Agro-forestry

Environment and ecology

Trade and commerce

Education

Communication

Food processing

Food retail, markets

Food industry

Financial Services

Health care

0 Nutrition

National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

0 Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

Small-scale farmer

Medium-scale farmer

Large-scale farmer

Local Non-Governmental Organization

International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

Government and national institution

Regional economic community

United Nations

International financial institution

Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

HOW DID YOU ORGANIZE THE DIALOGUE SO THAT THE PRINCIPLES WERE INCORPORATED, REINFORCED AND ENHANCED?

UNICEF's food system dialogues with school-age children and adolescents (10-19 years) had to adapt the method recommended by the Convenors Reference Manual to make the process more age appropriate for younger audiences. Despite these amendments, all the Principles of Engagement were upheld. These core tenants are also critical in the implementation of a child-centered approach, which relies on participation, inclusivity, respect, diversity, and curating a safe space to share an array of lived experiences.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

Activities were designed to safeguard the interest of children and allow participants to freely explore ideas and conversations. Therefore, questions were deliberately broad and open to interpretation, like the discussion questions provided in the Convenors Reference Manual. Facilitators were trained to limit their influence and avoid judging participants' responses, as per the facilitator trainings provided by the Summit team. A key aspect of the workshop was to gather children's insights in an enabling environment so we can better understand what matters to them - remembering to respect that there are no right or wrong answers, as per the Principles of Engagement. A more detailed description of specific activities which reflect these Principles can be found in the workshop facilitation manuals which contain guidance on recruitment of children, ethical and child safeguarding procedures, and detailed instructions for implementing creative and participatory activities with diverse children.

DO YOU HAVE ADVICE FOR OTHER DIALOGUE CONVENORS ABOUT APPRECIATING THE PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT?

These core Principles of Engagement are critical to ensure a safe space where all dialogue participants - especially children - can share their experiences, challenges, and visions, in an enabling environment, when it comes to food systems. Children's opinions and insights are central to any discussion around building healthier and more sustainable food systems and should be upheld at all times.

3. METHOD

The outcomes of a Dialogue are influenced by the method that is used.

DID YOU USE THE SAME METHOD AS RECOMMENDED BY THE CONVENORS REFERENCE MANUAL?

Yes

No

UNICEF committed to engage with and involve the voice of children and young people to inform the global and national narratives for the transformation of food systems in favor of nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable diets. UNICEF hosted food system dialogues with school-age children and adolescents (10-19 years) in 18 countries across seven world regions. To accommodate this younger age group, UNICEF partnered with Western Sydney University (WSU) to adapt the method recommended by the Convenors Reference Manual so that it was more age appropriate. These dialogues used a distributed data generation method pioneered by Young and Resilient Research Centre at WSU in collaboration with UNICEF and other partners. The methodology has successfully been used in several international projects, including three companion reports to the State of the World's Children (Third et al, 2017; Schmied et al, 2020; Fleming et al 2020). Working with UNICEF country offices, dialogues were conducted in Ghana, Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, UK, Turkey, Indonesia, Guatemala, China, Nepal, Netherlands, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Palestine, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mexico, Kenya, and Nigeria with children and adolescents aged 10-19. A set of workshop-based participatory activities were developed to explore children's experiences of food poverty and climate change on their diets, with a focus on documenting children's calls to action to underpin changes to their food systems. Workshops were rooted in the Summit's Principles of Engagement and were implemented by trained representatives of UNICEF Country Offices and facilitating partners. The team developed a comprehensive workshop facilitation manual containing guidance on recruitment of children, ethical and child safeguarding procedures, and detailed instructions for implementing a series of creative and participatory activities with diverse children. WSU trained facilitators to implement two or more workshops per country dialogue with children and adolescents aged 10-19. Workshops engaged children from a variety of socio-economic, cultural, and geographic backgrounds. During the workshop-based dialogues, children worked in small groups to complete a series of fun and interactive activities designed to capture their experiences of food and the challenges to food systems. Activities included drawing, mapping, group brainstorming, and discussion. The activities explored children's perceptions of food poverty and climate change focusing on understanding how they view the importance of food in their lives, mapping their food systems and what barriers or vulnerabilities they experience with in their food systems and what actions they can take to reduce the impact of food systems on the changing climate. Finally, the workshops provided children with the opportunity to voice what they see needs to change so that everyone can eat nutritious food without harming the environment. Dialogues were implemented either face-to-face or online. Online workshops used Zoom and Miro boards. The face-to-face version used a classic workshop setup in a single room with tables, markers, and paper-based worksheets. Activities were identical for both versions. Though most workshops were held online to comply with national pandemic-related restrictions, those that were held face-to-face followed national pandemic-related safety protocols. Once completed, if necessary, workshop responses were translated from the local language to English and uploaded to a secure data facility. Data were coded using a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques. The findings provided here uphold this child-centered approach. Children voiced that they enjoyed the workshops as they were an opportunity to express themselves and share their opinions. This is reflected in comments captured below by participants during the workshops. 'The meeting was fruitful, and you listened to our voices. 'We had fun! I can speak what's in my mind freely. 'Got the opportunity of expressing ourselves, which is also our right' The methodology - including child safeguarding processes - was approved by the WSU Human Ethics Committee (# H14363).

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

The workshop-based dialogues explored children's and adolescents' perceptions and lived experiences of their food systems, focusing on the issues of food poverty and climate change. Each country participating in the workshop-based dialogues conducted a minimum of two workshops with different participants; one workshop focused on food poverty and the other on climate change, enabling deep exploration of topics in the time available. Naturally, these topics and their discussions cut across all five Action Tracks.

Workshop-based dialogues explored children's perceptions of food poverty and climate change through the following activities:

Activity 1: This activity aims to surface what children think about food and what food means to them, this activity explores What children find appealing about food and what their aspirations are around eating to help inform aspects of food choice within their own food environments and systems. Children create a 'food cloud' by writing or typing foods they like and dislike.

Activities 2 & 3: To explore their food systems, children drew a map of how food arrives on their plate, marking where their food is grown, how it is transported, and where it is bought and consumed. They then map the constraints in their food systems, as they relate to food poverty and climate change, and propose solutions to these constraints.

Activity 4: This activity explores how children want to engage with these issues. Children were asked to explore what different people can do to help make sure that the foods we eat don't negatively impact the environment. Using a series of different levels of circles from individual through to community and national levels of governance what actions can be taken in their food systems to create positive change?

Activity 5: This activity generates children's calls to action to address the impacts of food poverty and climate change on their food systems. Children write a letter to their leaders, outlining their call for change.

Workshops concluded with a plenary discussion to draw our key insights.

These workshops enabled children to contribute their insights and perspectives to the ongoing debates across all action tracks. They discussed challenges and proposed how to enhance their access to safe nutritious foods. They identified barriers to sustainable consumption patterns in their communities and suggested ways to shift behaviors. They identified that young people have a vital role to play in boosting positive production which, in turn, will contribute to more equitable livelihoods. And they called on governments to take concrete action to support vulnerable communities and to build the resilience and a brighter future for all children and adolescents around the world.

ACTION TRACKS

- ✓ Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
- ✓ Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
- ✓ Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
- ✓ Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
- ✓ Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

- Finance
- ✓ Innovation
- ✓ Human rights
- ✓ Women & Youth Empowerment
- ✓ Policy
- ✓ Data & Evidence
- Governance
- Trade-offs
- ✓ Environment and Climate

MAIN FINDINGS

Describe in under 5,600 characters including spaces

Experiences of Food

Children pointed out that food is fundamental for obtaining energy and sustaining life. Food is a primary need for survival, a basic requirement for growth and health. However many children also linked food with joyfulness and happiness. Food was delicious and to be enjoyed, sometimes with family. These responses suggest that food for children is a mix of the material and the aspirational. Children focused on taste, health, and affordability when talking about foods they liked and conversely aspects like bitterness, smell, and unhealthiness when talking about foods they disliked. When asked about foods they would like to eat but couldn't, children often focused on price; these desirable foods were simply too expensive. Availability was also an issue, with foods not available in local markets, and health effects (too much fat/sugar) also a factor. Some children could choose the food they ate, but some could not, whether due to seasonal availability, price, or parents overseeing cooking. Food affordability was a key concern for children in Ghana, as it limited their ability to access food.

'I like plantain but very expensive. The price keeps fluctuating every week. So we eat the food that is less expensive and same food everyday and that is not healthy'.

Challenges to Food Systems

One core activity in the consultations was food mapping. Children mapped a food system around them, visualizing how food moved from the farm to the plate. Overall children demonstrated a deep understanding of food production, especially when it was a local staple food or meal. Children then reflected on what the vulnerabilities or weak points in these systems were. The main vulnerability voiced by the children was poor availability of food. Poor availability was due to minimal stock in the markets, distance from the farming areas, and problems with food distribution. Access to food is also significantly affected by poverty and disruption to food production by season/natural disaster. Another predominant concern was the poor quality of food due to water pollution, use of artificial fertilisers, and unhygienic market conditions. These concerns highlight once again how interconnected food systems are, with economic (e.g. high food prices) and environmental (e.g. flooding, low crop yields) frequently overlapping.

Strengthening Food Systems

Children completed activities designed to provide concrete suggestions for change at different levels of society, from family to community, industry, and government. They also wrote a "postcard to the President," outlining key changes that need to happen and how children could input into these shifts, with economic concerns about the high cost of living emerging as an important theme in Ghana. Many children saw potential in empowering communities to grow their own produce and learn more about sustainability. Farms and farming also emerged as a frequent theme, with children suggesting it should be promoted as a vocation and supported with financial incentives and training. Proximity of both food production and food consumption, as mentioned above, was a key concern. In response, children stressed that farms and markets should be local and accessible, moving from 'far away to being close'. Many of the childrens' suggestions strongly link food security with food autonomy: import less, regulate more, and invest seriously in local farms and infrastructure, producing enough cheap, nutritious food for all.

'I would tell the president that the Economy is too bad, the prices are too high'.

'The government should provide technologies and machines for farming to reduce the hard labor of farmers and also promote agriculture in Ghana'.

ACTION TRACKS

- Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
- Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
- Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
- Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
- Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

- Finance
- Innovation
- Human rights
- Women & Youth Empowerment
- Policy
- Data & Evidence
- Governance
- Trade-offs
- Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC

At the end of the workshop, the children engaged in a whole-group plenary discussion, where we asked them the key messages they wanted to convey to the UN. Overall, children felt the UN was responsible for ensuring food security, environmental preservation and ensuring equality. This was tied to understanding people's difficulties, with special consideration for places and groups that experience greater insecurity and marginalization. The UN was also seen as an entity responsible for collaborating globally to bring about social change. Four key themes emerged from our workshops:

1. Education: the UN should teach people about climate change, environmental protection, recycling, food systems; it should raise awareness of food inequality and show people the benefits of nutritious and sustainable practices, like eating seasonally
"further promote socialization about climate change, the food systems, and the 2030 SDGs, so that the world community is more aware of the condition of the earth"
2. Inclusion: the UN should listen to young people, create offline (e.g. forums) and online (e.g. platforms) spaces for them to share their views, collaborate with them, and involve them as government intermediaries
"I hope UN continues to invite youths from various countries to participate in every activity because youths are the future leaders of nations. Let youths learn how to protect the world"
3. Regulation: the UN should regulate food production, establishing laws to tackle global warming, keeping food producers accountable, auditing programs to ensure compliance, addressing plastic and deforestation, and controlling chemicals/pesticides
"UN intervention to countries must be more aggressive. For example, an international Environmental Impact Analysis seems to need to be agreed. Auditing food producers must be conducted from upstream to downstream."
4. Support: the UN should support sustainable food production, strengthening infrastructure, enhancing distribution, and implementing programs that make food more affordable and accessible, especially for those most impacted by food poverty and climate change (e.g. indigenous communities)
"support access to nutritious foods for low-income and vulnerable population", "defend the rights of indigenous people", "strengthen the supply chain of foods"

ACTION TRACKS

- ✓ Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
- ✓ Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
- ✓ Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
- ✓ Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
- ✓ Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

- Finance
- ✓ Innovation
- ✓ Human rights
- ✓ Women & Youth Empowerment
- Policy
- ✓ Data & Evidence
- Governance
- Trade-offs
- ✓ Environment and Climate

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

[WSU statement] Overall children were in agreement about the strengths and vulnerabilities of food systems, how to improve food sustainability, the issues that needed addressing, and the stakeholders that should be focused on. There were certainly different focal points. For example, some children focused on financial and educational support for farmers, while others focused on government legislation around food safety and food systems. But ultimately we see these as overlapping and supplementary, rather than divergent. To make food systems more sustainable and nutritious, a holistic approach will be needed involving a broad range of different actors and interventions.

ACTION TRACKS

- ✓ Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
- ✓ Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
- ✓ Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
- ✓ Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
- ✓ Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

- Finance
- ✓ Innovation
- ✓ Human rights
- ✓ Women & Youth Empowerment
- ✓ Policy
- ✓ Data & Evidence
- Governance
- Trade-offs
- ✓ Environment and Climate