UNICEF Convenes Local Community-Change Makers for a Public “Activate Talk” on Sustainability and Responsible Consumption

10 November 2016, NEW YORK: UNICEF Headquarters opened its doors to the young public of the greater New York metro area for an “activate talk” on becoming more sustainable. The event, entitled *From Trashing to Treasuring: Community change-makers for a sustainable world*, featured a panel of young community change-makers who are working on sustainability issues in their personal and professional lives. The event was intended to support the United Nations' wider effort to get the public involved in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals -- 17 global goals aimed at creating a better world for people and planet by the year 2030.

“There are two things that I think were quite unique about this event,” said Shannon O’Shea, UNICEF’s Agenda 2030 Partnerships Manager and Team Leader. “One, the people that spoke are not UN people. In fact some of them had never heard about the SDGs before we asked them to be part of the panel. However, they care deeply about sustainability and are already practicing the values embodied in the SDGs, and that is what was important to showcase. Second, the event was open to the public. We wanted to consciously appeal to a different audience than would usually have the opportunity to participate in a UN event -- because if the SDGs are going to have a chance to succeed, their messages need to reach far beyond the UN system and its immediate ecosystem.”

The topic for this particular activate talk was chosen based on feedback from young people themselves. “During the SDG negotiations, we did a lot of consultation with children and young people,” said Callie King-Guffey, a Research and Communications Consultant on the UNICEF Agenda 2030 Team. “Young people were very passionate about issues of climate change and the unsustainable use of our natural resources, already innovating and campaigning on how to solve these challenges. It was easy to find five dynamic speakers and change-makers to tell us more about what they are doing in this space.”

The panel of speakers included: *Andrea Burgueño* on designing sustainable solutions for food waste management; *Ovie Mughelli* a former NFL ProBowl fullback on using sport to energize kids for greener communities; *Melissa O'Young* on the share economy and Community Engagement Lead at Airbnb; *Lauren Singer* on living a zero waste lifestyle and founder of Trash is for Tossers and The Simply Co.; and *Sean Southey*, on using comics to engage children on the SDGs, CEO of PCI Media Impact and co-founder of Comics Uniting Nations.

Both O’Shea and King-Guffey were overwhelmed by the response and willingness to take part. “Tickets had to be limited due to venue capacity,” said O’Shea. “And all of the available tickets were reserved in less than 24 hours.” “After the tickets were gone, we started getting emails to be added to the waitlist, or people volunteering to just come and help in some way,” added King-Guffey. “It was humbling but also very telling that we have tapped into a demand for these types of discussions to take place.”

The event was held at UNICEF House on Monday, November 7th and also featured “booths” that provided attendees with information about getting more sustainable. Organizations/initiatives featured were: Butterbeans, My Conscious My Choice, Comics Uniting Nations, Sure We Can, GoodFill, Voices of Youth Climate Mappers, World’s Largest Lesson and UNICEF USA Student Clubs.
The plan is to host 2-3 events per year, covering various dimensions of sustainable development. “During the event, we asked the audience two questions that they can answer via our Instagram page,” explained O’Shea. “First, tell us one thing you are going to do differently in your life based on what you heard today. Second, tell us what you would like to talk about at the next activate talk. We are really excited to hear what they come up with.”

Watch the recording of the event here: https://youtu.be/eNzlwlw1Et4

Learn more about UNICEF’s work on the Sustainable Development Goals here: http://www.unicef.org/agenda2030/

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