



EMPOWER REFUGEE youth

YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAMME



“ With an education, everyone has an equal and fair chance to make it in life. But I believe education is not only about the syllabus. It is about friendship and also a place to discover our talents and allow us to discover our destiny. ”

Mary Maker,
South Sudanese refugee, speaks at TEDxKakumaCamp,
held at Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya

UNHCR's pioneering

YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAMME

sets **a new benchmark** for initiatives seeking to ensure that more refugee youth have access to **quality post-primary education**. It is an investment in the future of refugee youth, unlocking their potential and leading them towards solutions.



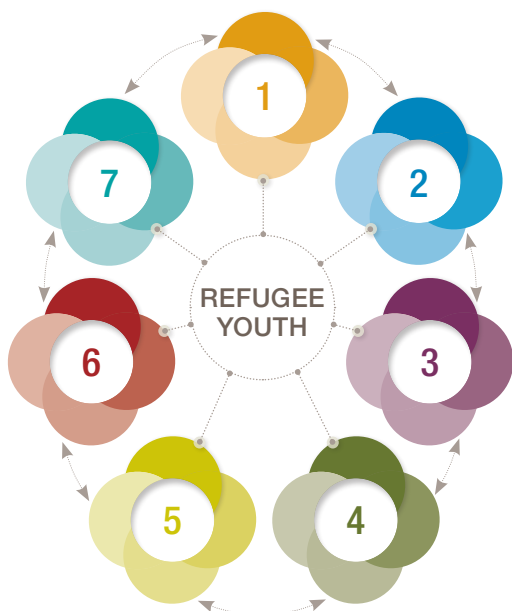
Currently being piloted in Kenya, Pakistan, Rwanda and Uganda between 2017 and 2021, **the Youth Education Programme will work with over 232,000 refugee youth.** The global needs of youth dwarfs this number, and the programme aims to build on evidence from this first step, opening up further educational and economic opportunities on a wider scale.

The **Global Refugee Youth Consultations** in **22 countries**, organised by UNHCR and the Women’s Refugee Commission in 2015 and 2016¹, brought a request from refugee youth for UNHCR and partners to ensure that young refugees are given opportunities to shape their own futures, and develop the skills they need during displacement and beyond. The importance of post-primary education is expressed throughout the Seven Core Actions for Refugee Youth emerging from the Global Refugee Youth Consultations, including addressing the need to empower youth through meaningful engagement, as well as to recognise, utilise, and develop youth capacities and skills.

The Youth Education Programme responds to these seven core actions with **innovative approaches**, including the use of technology, specific capacity and skills development, and youth-centred community-based models of engagement. The programme prioritises education and training for **youth empowerment and self-reliance**, and improves access to **inclusive high-quality learning opportunities** through secondary and higher education, skills development, and vocational training. Mentoring, social network promotion, and peer-to-peer support are important elements of the programme.

The Youth Education Programme works with refugee youth who are in school, as well as those who are out of school.

Global Refugee Youth Consultations: Seven Core Actions



- 1 Empower** refugee youth through meaningful engagement
Decision making • Advocacy • Participation • Leadership
- 2 Recognise**, utilise, and develop refugee youth capacities and skills
Opportunity • Learning • Employment • Inclusion
- 3 Ensure** refugee youth-focused protection
Documentation • Outreach • Security • Rights
- 4 Support** the physical and emotional wellbeing of refugee youth
Health • Access • Involvement • Recreation
- 5 Facilitate** refugee youth networking and information sharing
Innovation • Ideas • Exchange • Organise
- 6 Reinforce** refugee youth in their role as connectors and peace builders
Community • Building • Connecting • Bridging
- 7 Generate** data and evidence on refugee youth to promote accountability to youth
Transparency • Listening • Research • Data

The Youth Education Programme responds to the demands by refugee youth for more education and skills training opportunities. There is a growing recognition by governments that sustainable development requires greater investment in post-primary education for both refugee and host-community youth.

Expanding education and training for young people is central to the New York Declaration and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, aligned with the aims of Sustainable Development Goal 4.

REFUGEE YOUTH EDUCATION

AN IMPERATIVE FOR RESILIENCE

Educational institutions offer refugee youth a place of safety during displacement.

Education is an investment in the future, nurturing and developing the leaders, teachers, peace-builders, scientists, architects, engineers,

civil servants, health workers, and home makers who will rebuild and revitalise their countries. Educating refugee youth is central to the peaceful and sustainable development of the countries where they reside, as well as the countries they will return or move to.

Refugee youth are dynamic and resourceful people, who possess the potential to create change in their communities. More than half of the 20 million refugees under UNHCR's mandate are aged under 18. In some places, this figure is even higher. In Kakuma camp in Kenya, 75% of refugees are under 25. In spite of this, official policies and development programmes often overlook the needs, experiences, and potential of young refugees. Too many youth have little or no access to education, employment, or social opportunities. They grow into adulthood in conditions of displacement and insecurity, which can result in them remaining marginalized and highly vulnerable.

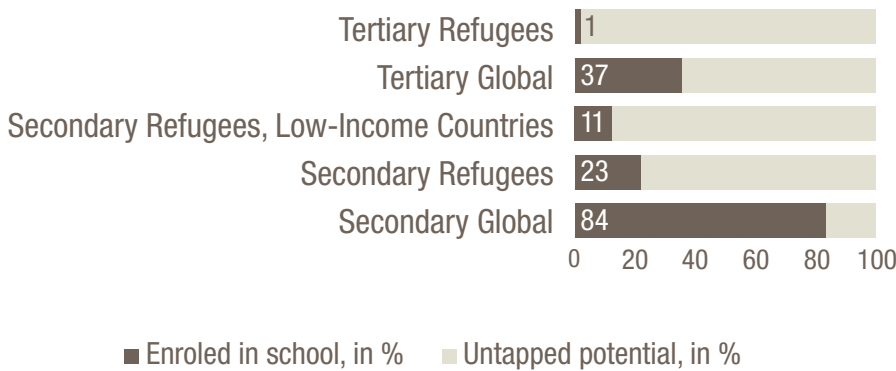
UNTAPPED POTENTIAL²

In some places, secondary schools do not exist, and where they do, they are often inaccessible to refugees, especially girls.

A refugee child is 5 times more likely to be out of school than other children.³ Young refugees face pressure to find work, get married quickly, and fulfill household duties. Just 1% of them make it through to tertiary education.



Figure 1. Refugee enrolment



Secondary education services for refugees are hard to access. Refugee youth are often excluded from national education systems, or face limitations to their freedom of movement, preventing them from accessing schools which are located at a distance from their homes. In most refugee areas there are frequently fewer, if any, secondary schools. Refugees often miss out on school for long periods due to conflict and flight, making it difficult for them to enrol in school without extra help, which is seldom available. Refugees may need to learn a new language to be able to attend school. The host country may not accept exam certificates from the home country, or may not allow children without birth certificates or identity papers to enrol. Cost also poses a barrier. Per student, secondary schooling costs more than primary, as secondary schools are more complex to manage, staff are more specialized, and facilities and teaching materials cost more. Refugees commonly face restrictions to their right to work in the host country, so often parents cannot get jobs to earn money to pay for their children’s education.

Tertiary education is almost out of reach, with 99% of refugees excluded from university and other forms of tertiary education. Low levels of secondary education completion diminish tertiary education possibilities. However, even if refugees are able to

complete secondary schooling, the cost of higher education is a major barrier, increased by the need in most cases to live away from home.

There are few opportunities for skills training, with insufficient access to formal and non-formal skills training programmes for refugee youth, either within formal schooling, or for those who are out of school. As a result, refugee youth often find themselves without the relevant skills and opportunities for gainful employment. Those who have not accessed or completed school also lack clear pathways and support to move on to recognized and accredited professional training programmes, which could lead to safer and more stable livelihoods. Refugees often face policy barriers to finding stable employment, which discourages their pursuit of education and training.

Girls in particular struggle to enrol in and complete post-primary education. Added to the difficulties of arriving in a new country, and possibly having to learn a new language, refugee girls face additional barriers. Living in isolated and remote locations creates obstacles for girls to access and stay in school, due to distance, insecure routes, and lack of safe transport. Common barriers that refugee girls share with girls from host communities are poor sanitation and hygiene facilities, as well

as a lack of female teachers in schools, especially where this is culturally appropriate. As they get older, refugee girls face more marginalization, and the gender gap grows wider. In some societies, for cultural reasons that are often exacerbated by the new environment and the family's efforts to keep their female members out of harm's way, girls' education is not prioritised. Schools often fail to adequately address the sexual and gender-based violence to which girls are exposed. Many families therefore keep their girls at home for domestic duties, or seek to arrange early marriages for them.

A GLOBAL CHALLENGE

Globally, in spite of international commitments, 200 million young people between 12 and 17 years old are not in school.

Poverty is a major cause. Most live in Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, the Middle East, and Southern Asia.⁴ Although refugees have additional challenges to overcome, as result of their experiences in conflict areas, arriving in a foreign country, and sometimes missing out on several years of education, all young people from poor families in low-income countries find it hard to complete their education and earn a living. To achieve inclusive and sustainable development for all, we need to address these issues together with the communities hosting refugees.

Sustainable Development Agenda

The SDG's promise to leave no one behind. SDG4 states that refugees should be included in efforts to achieve education goals. Policymakers, as well as humanitarian and development professionals, have become increasingly aware that very high numbers of refugee youth are not in education, training, or employment.

THE YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAMME WILL CONTRIBUTE TO:



SDG Target 4.4: to give more youth and adults the skills they need, including technical and vocational skills, to find jobs or become entrepreneurs.



SDG Target 4.7: to promote the skills needed for sustainable development, including understanding human rights, gender equality, global citizenship, and values of peace and non-violence.



SDG Target 8.6: to 'substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training' by 2020.

PROGRAMME COMPONENTS



SECONDARY EDUCATION

Secondary school is an important stepping-stone towards lifelong learning.

It opens the door to tertiary education, skills training, and employment opportunities. It provides a safe space for youth who are at risk from child labour, sexual and other forms of exploitation, recruitment by armed groups, early marriage and pregnancy, or negative coping behaviours. Girls' access to secondary education is particularly important. When a refugee girl receives secondary education, her family and community are more likely to improve their social and economic status, as well as their health.⁵ Secondary school graduates, both boys and girls, are more likely to find jobs that can provide a sustainable income for their families.

Together we aim to:

- Help strengthen the capacity of governments and other partners to **include refugee youth in national secondary schools**.
- Assist local authorities to **build additional school facilities**, including classrooms, sanitation, and hygiene facilities
- **Provide financial support** to enable refugee youth to attend national secondary schools.
- Assist schools to **expand use of information and communications technologies (ICT) and school laboratories** and install solar panels to provide power and connectivity.
- **Promote** the professional development of teachers and use ICT to improve teaching quality.

- **Support accelerated education programmes** that allow refugee youth who have missed out on school to catch up on their studies and transition to the formal secondary education system and/or skills development opportunities.
- **Encourage the setting up and training of school management committees**, including refugee teachers, parents, and students



EDUCATION FOR GIRLS

Girls face additional barriers to education for various reasons, including social and cultural conventions, and family expectations. Refugee girls who cannot attend school are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, domestic labour, early marriage, pregnancy, and exploitative and dangerous forms of employment. Ensuring that refugee girls can access education is therefore central to their empowerment, and to the prosperity and increased resilience of their families and communities. The number of child deaths from pneumonia, diarrhoea, and malaria would fall by 49% if all girls finished secondary school.⁶ Similarly, child marriages would fall by 64% if all girls finish secondary school.⁷ UNHCR's report, *Her Turn*, highlights that helping refugee girls to obtain a good education requires coordinated action among all stakeholders – from Education Ministries and teacher training institutions, to communities and local schools, to donors, international organisations, and the private sector.⁸

Together we aim to:

- **Provide cash support to families**, to increase girls' enrolment in secondary school, in higher education institutions, and in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes.
- **Raise awareness** of the importance of post-primary education for girls, and the opportunities that are available.





- **Provide school materials**, solar lamps, and other forms of support that help girls to pursue their studies at all levels.
- Provide **school transport** and build **appropriate and safe infrastructure**.
- **Support extra-curricular classes**⁹, **peer-to-peer support**, and mentoring for refugee girls in secondary education.
- **Increase the number of qualified female teachers** in secondary schools by helping female students to obtain certified teaching qualifications.



TERTIARY EDUCATION

The demand for access to tertiary education among refugees has grown exponentially, both in recent emergencies, and in situations of protracted displacement. Participation in tertiary education promotes social cohesion and stability, as students actively shape perceptions about refugees within a broader community of young people. Refugees who have graduated from a higher education institution often speak additional languages, and stand a better chance of earning a living and contributing to society. Greater access to, and funding of, scholarships for tertiary education is required. Expansion of connected learning programmes, where refugees combine online and face-to-face learning, is also needed. In places of isolation and reduced mobility, connected learning effectively reduces costs, and increases access to tertiary education for refugees.

Together we aim to:

- Help more refugees to attend higher education institutions through expanded **partnerships with higher education institutions** in order to increase scholarship quotas for refugees.
- Provide financial support to **scholarship programmes** that enable refugee youth to enrol in tertiary education.
- Provide **intensive language programmes** to help refugee students pursue their studies in countries of asylum.
- Set-up and expand **higher education connected learning programmes** to reach more students.
- Build **partnerships with the private sector** to improve and expand access to connected learning.
- **Assist refugees to access bridging programmes**¹⁰, to help them learn content they have missed, or support knowledge and skill acquisition, in order to transition successfully from secondary to tertiary education.
- Train ICT facilitators and upgrade **ICT infrastructure**.
- Provide laboratories with **IT equipment and materials** and improve access to electricity and the internet.





SKILLS FOR LIFE AND WORK

To obtain jobs and entrepreneurial skills, youth need access to both formal and non-formal flexible educational opportunities, and technical and vocational training. Refugee youth who have only completed primary or lower secondary school need help to obtain qualifications, so that they can transition to higher levels of education and increase personal development. Youth training programmes need to teach practical and technical skills, as well as interpersonal, social, and civic skills, that enable youth to problem-solve and develop positive values. A comprehensive approach will help students to join the economy, participate in their communities, and make informed decisions. In an increasingly digital world, they also need digital literacy.

Together we aim to:

- **Increase the number of secondary schools** that combine technical skills training with formal secondary education, and provide entrepreneurship training and internships.
- Encourage and incentivise national TVET institutes, in partnership with humanitarian, development, and private sector actors, to **include refugees in TVET programmes.**
- Construct and upgrade **youth development centres**, to provide electricity, internet connectivity, and ICT equipment.
- **Support language, literacy and numeracy classes, business and entrepreneurship courses, ICT and connected learning programmes, and counselling** for out-of-school youth.

- **Offer change maker grants** that give refugee youth an opportunity to lead and learn by developing their own activities and solutions.



YOUTH EDUCATION RESEARCH

The Youth Education Programme also seeks to improve the relevance, protection, and sustainability of youth education and training programmes that UNHCR and its partners provide. The importance of post-primary education for young refugees emerges clearly in the core recommendations of the Global Refugee Youth Consultations. However, research in education in emergencies is generally limited, and this is particularly the case in the area of refugee youth education.

With the aim of developing a rigorous evidence-base for youth education programming, a three year collaborative youth education research project started in 2018, examining the implementation and impact of the youth education activities. The project operates in two interconnected ways. With a focus on the impact of post-primary education for refugee youth, this research project adopts a youth-centred approach, training youth as participatory researchers to engage fully in the project. The research also fills a gap in the refugee education evidence base globally, engaging and empowering young people from refugee communities to be active stakeholders in the research process.





EDUCATION AND TRAINING PATHWAYS TO A MORE SECURE FUTURE FOR REFUGEE YOUTH

YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAMME

- Include refugees in national systems.
- Provide targeted support to enrol and keep refugee youth in school and help them transition to next level.
- Offer practical and innovative activities to provide educational and training pathways to secure livelihoods.



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OUR APPROACH

Promote national inclusion

We are strengthening our partnerships with host governments and development partners to enhance the capacity of secondary education services to benefit youth from both refugee and host communities. We promote the inclusion of refugees in national educational planning, budgeting and monitoring, through close collaboration with education partners, and participation in Local Education Groups and other national processes. We advocate for policies that permit refugees to enrol in education, including tertiary education, under the same conditions as nationals.

Support teachers to raise the quality of education

We work with national partners to improve the quality of teacher training and professional development, including through the use of ICT. We support the strengthening of teacher management (including pay and conditions, accommodation, and transport), both for national and refugee teachers.

Harness innovative approaches

We promote innovation by supporting refugee youth to drive programme design. We do this by exploring, together with youth and partners, how to reduce the educational barriers that refugee youth face in specific contexts, and build on successful initiatives such as the TIGER girls programme in Jordan¹¹, Teachers-for-Teachers, and connected learning programmes.

Strengthen youth engagement

We consult with refugee youth to ensure that programmatic approaches meet their needs, and to develop more youth-led initiatives. We provide more leadership opportunities that assist young refugees to be ambassadors in their communities, participate in decision-making bodies, and act as local or national spokespersons or advocates. We strengthen mentoring, social networks,

and peer-to-peer support for refugee and host community youth. We work with UNHCR's Global Youth Advisory Council, which is composed of 15 refugee youth (including representatives from Kenya, Pakistan and Uganda)¹², and the Council liaises with national refugee youth organizations, to ensure that the needs and aspirations of young refugees are met.

Build and strengthen partnerships

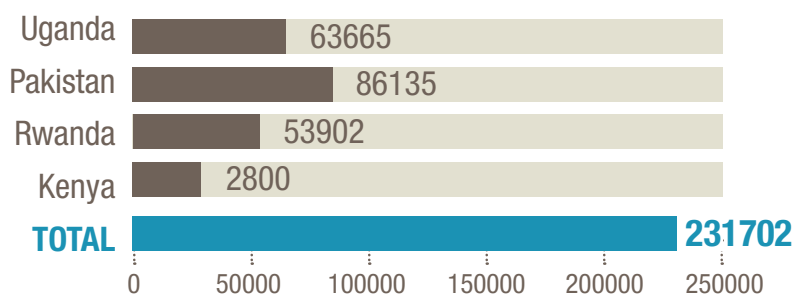
We are strengthening our partnerships with host governments, communities, schools and teachers, TVET and higher education institutions, the private sector, and development actors. Together, we promote an enabling environment for refugee youth, and improve the quality of learning, training, and support that is available to youth in refugee and host communities, who are prevented by poverty, remoteness, or structural disadvantages from completing their education or professional training. Working closely with private sector partners, we are increasing the provision of internships and traineeships, and multiplying digital solutions and online learning opportunities. With our partners, we are expanding opportunities to train in business skills, providing mentoring for start-ups, and financially assisting youth development centres and TVET institutions to improve their facilities and equipment.



PROGRAMME COUNTRIES¹³

Together with partners, and in collaboration with national authorities and education institutions, UNHCR teams in Kenya, Pakistan, Rwanda and Uganda are already implementing education programmes. Although the four countries have hosted a large number of refugees for many years, appropriate support for quality secondary and post-secondary education and training for refugees has been insufficient to meet needs and demand.

Figure 2. Young Refugees who will benefit from the Youth Education Programme, 2017 - 2021



In all four countries, refugees have the right to access the national education system. However, enrolment rates of refugees between the ages of 12 and 17 have been extremely low. In Pakistan, for example, only 5% of this age group are in school. In Uganda, about the figure is 6%. In Uganda, there are only five girls for every ten boys enrolled in secondary education, while in Kenya, there are only four girls for every ten boys enrolled.

UNHCR's programmes offer tertiary education scholarships for refugees in all four countries. In Kenya, a connected learning approach has also been underway for some years. In Rwanda and Kenya, opportunities for TVET, work skills training, and non-formal education need to be increased, to meet the demand among refugee and host community youth.

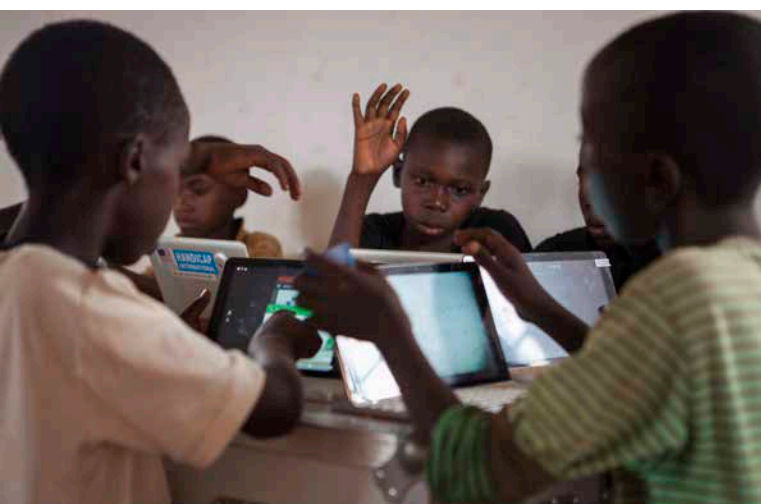
Challenges of access, availability, quality, cost, and other key factors standing in the way of education for refugee youth, need more attention and a focused effort. The Youth Education Programme builds on existing activities in the four countries, scaling these and expanding into new activities, in close collaboration with refugee youth, the governments, and other partners. The Youth Education Programme is intended to gradually expand to other refugee hosting countries, in order to strengthen and grow programming that will help reduce the gap in refugee youth education.



EXPECTED RESULTS¹⁴

We aim to:

1. Increase the number of refugee youth, including girls, who enrol, remain in, and complete their **secondary education** in national schools.
2. Increase the number of refugee youth, including women, who enrol in, and complete, **tertiary education programmes**.
3. Increase the number of refugee youth who are equipped with **life and work skills**.
4. Improve the **policy environment** for refugee youth, addressing their access to secondary and tertiary education, as well as skills training.



ENDNOTES

- ¹ UNHCR. 2016. We Believe in Youth. Global Refugee Youth Consultations, Final Report.
- ² UNHCR. 2017. Left Behind. Refugee Education in Crisis.
- ³ UNHCR. 2016. Missing out. Refugee Education in Crisis.
- ⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). 2018. Fact Sheet No. 48. One in Five Children, Adolescents and Youth is Out of School.
- ⁵ UNHCR. 2018. Her Turn. It is time to make refugee girls' education a priority.
- ⁶ UNESCO. 2013. Education Transforms Lives.
- ⁷ UNESCO. 2014. Global Education Monitoring Report.
- ⁸ UNHCR. 2018. Her Turn. It is time to make refugee girls' education a priority.
- ⁹ Remedial programmes provide additional support, concurrent with regular classes, to students who require some short-term help with content or skills in order to succeed in regular classes. Source: Accelerated Education Working Group. October 2017. Guide to the Accelerated Education Principles, p. 10.
- ¹⁰ A bridging programme is a short-term targeted preparation course that assists students to make the transition from their home to their host education system and curriculum, or to prepare for entry into a different type of certified education. It builds on the student's previous success, for example in language acquisition. Source: Accelerated Education Working Group. October 2017. Guide to the Accelerated Education Principles, p. 10.
- ¹¹ 'TIGER' (These Inspiring Girls Enjoy Reading) is a community-based programme developed in the Zaatari camp in Jordan which motivates Syrian adolescent girls to return to or remain in school. Adolescent girls have access to books and digital content in Arabic and English through a multi-media open-source library that uses tablets. The programme is supported by Open Learning Exchange.
- ¹² UNHCR. Global Youth Advisory Council's recommendations to the Programme of Action of the Global Compact on Refugees. January 2018.
- ¹³ UNHCR intends to expand and scale the Youth Education Programme globally to address the needs in other refugee host countries.
- ¹⁴ The numbers in the graph are estimates. The programme will invest in national structures and aims to include refugee youth in national education programmes. It is estimated that an additional 438,000 young people in the four countries could indirectly benefit from the programme.

“ Education is a way to help young people heal, but it is also the way to revive entire countries. Allowed to learn, grow and flourish, children will grow up to contribute both to the societies, that host them, and to their homelands when peace allows them to return. That is why education is one of the most important ways to solve the world’s crises. ”

Filippo Grandi,
UN High Commissioner for Refugees



YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Youth are dynamic and resourceful, with hopes, dreams, ambitions, and **huge potential**. Investing in the Youth Education Programme gives refugee youth the **opportunity** to access education and skills for life and work, enabling these young people to **contribute positively** to their communities, their countries, and most importantly, their own futures.

EMPOWER
REFUGEE
youth

YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAMME



Photos: © UNHCR/WRC

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