

Malta National Consultation

30th April 2016
Rabat, Malta



The Global Refugee Youth Consultations

The Global Refugee Youth Consultations (GRYC) were launched in July 2015 at the UNHCR-NGO Consultations in Geneva. A joint initiative of UNHCR and the Women's Refugee Commission, supported by the Youth and Adolescents in Emergencies Advocacy Group (YAE)¹, the GRYC are supported by a Coordinator, Project Officer and Advisory Committee (consisting of national and international NGOs, youth representatives and an independent youth expert).

Refugee youth are often left out of activities and programmes organised by the UN, NGOs and other organisations. Youth have skills, capabilities, aspirations and needs that often go unrecognised and are not understood. There is a need to reach out and hear from them about the challenges they face, their visions and what support they need to shape positive futures. The consultations are providing opportunities for refugee youth to discuss issues that affect them with host country youth and representatives from the United Nations, international NGOs, national NGOs and other organizations working with youth in the country. The process aims to place youth at the centre of decision making processes that affect them and to recognize their potential. The target group for this project are young refugees that fit the United Nations definition of 'Youth' which is all boys and girls, young women and young men between the ages of 15-24 years.

The consultations are taking place between November 2015 and June 2016. They will include national level consultations in Africa, the Americas, Asia-Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa. The 'National Consultations' are led by national NGOs from each country with UNHCR and an international NGO partner. Similar consultations will also be held with refugee youth in North America, Australasia and Europe. Opportunities to participate in smaller consultations and online are also being provided through a designated toolkit and a Facebook platform. The process will culminate in a global consultation in Geneva in June 2016 and participation by young people in the 2016 annual UNHCR-NGO Consultations, the overarching theme of which is Youth.

Objectives and design

Underpinning the design of the national consultations are the four core objectives of the GRYC:

1. To create structured spaces for young refugees to have a voice and engage in participatory dialogue with other youth and relevant stakeholders at local, national, regional and global levels
2. To improve access for young refugees to local, national, regional and global youth alliances and networks
3. To foster and support participation, leadership and empowerment opportunities for young refugees
4. To consolidate and channel the learning from the consultations into the development of guidelines and policy recommendations on youth-inclusive programming, to improve the humanitarian sector's understanding of, and work with, young refugees

A participatory approach is being used throughout. The session plans were developed by the GRYC Coordinator, in consultation with UNHCR and WRC. They were designed through a collaborative and iterative process, including:

¹ The Youth and Adolescents in Emergencies Advocacy Group (YAE Group) includes representatives from more than 15 humanitarian organizations that are committed to achieving better outcomes for young people in humanitarian situations.

- An extensive review of literature and other materials relating to consultations with youth, displaced populations and participatory research methods, in order to learn from previous experience and to adapt relevant pre-existing models.²
- The active input of a group of young refugees and asylum seekers was sought during a two-day residential workshop in Malta, in October 2015, organised in partnership with UNHCR Malta and a Maltese NGO, Organisation for Friendship and Diversity (OFD). The group consisted of males and females representing the full age range of the global consultations (15-24), and five countries - Libya, Somalia, Mali, Eritrea and Palestine.
- Input into the development of the session plans and the content of the national consultations was also sought from members of the GRYC Advisory Committee - in person with the Regional Leads representing Africa, Asia Pacific and Latin America during a two-day meeting in Geneva, and by email and skype with the full GRYC Advisory Committee³
- A full pilot national consultation in Uganda that provided an opportunity to learn from the participants and adapt the approach and session plans accordingly.

² Some examples of key resources accessed include: Youth Consultations for a Post-2015 Framework: A Toolkit. Youth in Action (2013); A Kit of Tools for Participatory Research and Evaluation with Children, Young People and Adults. Save the Children Norway (2008); Listen and Learn: Participatory Assessment with Children and Adolescents. UNHCR (2012); Community Consultations Using Extended Dialogue Methodology. UNHCR (2010-11); Post 2015 Youth Engagement Event Planning Kit. World Vision (2012); Considering Consulting? A Guide to Meaningful Consultation with Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds. The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (2007).

³ The Advisory Committee Regional Leads include: Plan International and Terres des Hommes

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National Partners

The Consultation in Malta was organised at a national level by OFD - Malta (the Organisation for Friendship in Diversity), a local grassroots NGO working with forced migrants since 2009, particularly focusing on children adolescents and youth. The organisation began its involvement with the GRYC process at its inception in October 2015 by supporting with the initial piloting efforts, out of which a refugee youth initiative was born. The latter, now known as SPARK 15 was also one of the driving forces behind a 'second' consultation effort with refugee youth in Malta.

The 30th April consultation was also organised with the support of UNHCR Malta, Integra Foundation, KOPIN and financially supported by Terres des Hommes International.

Facilitators:

The facilitation team was composed of 2 expert facilitators

- Alba Cauchi - Director, Organisation for Friendship in Diversity
- Maria Pisani - Director, Integra Foundation

and supported by

- David Castillo - Durable Solutions Officer, UNHCR Malta
- Paul Galea - Project Coordinator, Organisation for Friendship in Diversity
- Hourie Tafech - Member of SPARK 15 - facilitator for 2 activities

Note taking was carried out by Joanna Jebaili of KOPIN

There was no need for interpretation and the working language of the consultation was English, with occasional group conversations running in Arabic.

Selection process

During October of 2015 part of the piloting for the consultation process was held in Malta. Out of this the youth initiative SPARK 15 was born. The group has committed to ongoing activities and to carrying out a number of projects as a team. One of these was the organisation of a formal consultation within the European section of the GRYC. For this reason the group actively sought to expand its member base and involve other youth, also through participation in the GRYC.

Participants were thus invited and selected by the group itself and included

- 8 youth that participated in the pilot session (of which 4 attended)
- 14 new members and potential new members (of which 9 attended)

The invitation was also extended to UAMs currently residing within the government reception centres and while a number were expected to attend no feedback was received.

Demographics of Participating Youth

While a total of 20 - 25 youth were expected, real numbers amounted to 13. Below please find a summary of the demographics.

Out of a total of 13 participants, all were over 18. 8 were male and 5 were female. They came from a wide diversity of countries namely

- Eritrea
- Ethiopia
- Libya
- Nigeria
- Palestine
- Sudan
- Syria
- Tunisia

All the youth have been in Malta for over a year, ranging from the newest arrival at 1 year and the longest permanence related to one youth that was born in Malta 20 years ago. 12 on 13 have been in Malta for under 5 years.

None of the youth would identify as having a disability



An interesting point of note for the participating group is that all have completed primary and secondary education, 6 are also in the process of acquiring or have acquired post-secondary qualifications (Diplomas), 2 of the participants are currently employed and 1 is married

Structure of Consultation

The following agenda was rolled out on the 30th of April. The copy below corresponds to the one shared with facilitators.

Time	Activity	Description
9.30 - 10.00	Arrival and Introductions	
10.00 - 10.30	What is GRYC and Why are We here?	Brief description of GRYC process Brainstorming session on what the overall objectives of GRYC are.
10.30 - 11.15	What are our Needs and Challenges	Toolkit Exercise: Identifying Needs and Issues
11.15 - 11.45	Coffee Break	
11.45 - 12.45	Which is the most important issue for us?	Toolkit Exercise: Diamond Ranking - Prioritising Issues
12.45 - 14.00	Lunch	
14.00 - 15.30	World Cafe	Toolkit Exercise: World Cafe - Generating Solutions
15.30 - 15.40	Energy!	Energiser activity + quick drink
15.40 - 16.15	What's your role?	Toolkit Exercise: What's your role?
16.15 - 17.00	Circles of Influence	Toolkit Exercise: Circles of Influence (Modified to be done as a whole group)
17.00 - 17.45	Conclusions & Recommendations	

Adaptations, additions and agenda challenges

The Malta group presents a particular situation; while in its dimensions Malta inherently presents a very specific context where the macro and micro levels of any intervention are in close proximity; operators in the forced migration field either collaborate on one level or another, or are at some point in direct contact. Advocacy and lobbying occurs in a small context and channels for stakeholders, particularly institutional contacts are often direct. The debates that took place on the day therefore reflect this context and focus very much on solutions that can be activated locally.

There is definitely a significant difference between the consultation run in Malta and that run in other countries. Apart from, as mentioned, the youth being directly involved in bringing in other youth to participate, this was an exercise where although carried out, in abridged format was a second consultation experience for a number of the participants. While the piloting exercise in October was an experimental activity in that it was the first time Refugee youth were ever consulted in Malta in their capacity as youth, this exercise was no longer novel, and though some activities were switched for others, familiarity with the toolkit exercises allowed for an easier execution and roll out of the day.

Another significant point connected to the latter, as mentioned previously, since the pilot produced an active group of youth, the 'second' consultation was in/advertently also an effort to involve more youth in consultative processes and continued carrying an expectation for further dialogue and analysing needs and issues on a deeper level.

Furthermore

- A brainstorming exercise to collect details on why the youth were present on the day was important to sense whether they were on the same wavelength. Since the application process was not entirely aligned to the GRYC process this allowed to give the consultation a solid foundation.
- Stakeholder dialogue was not envisaged as since all the youth attend post-secondary education the activity was to be held on a Saturday which hindered the involvement of national institutions
- National youth were not involved but involvement is sought in the ongoing development of the youth initiative's ongoing work in the coming months.
- The identity exercise produced very specific and often individual specific results due to shared exacerbated issues that steered small group discussions.
- The youth drove a debriefing session into a detailed brainstorming of next steps, outcomes and proposed solutions to the challenges identified
- There was insufficient time for the youth to delve deeper into concretely stating their recommendations therefore these were collated from the continuous input that was shared during the sessions.

Consultation findings

Where we started

Why are we here? The participants of the Malta consultation joined this effort to

1. Seek ownership of the problem
2. Search for someone to listen
3. New contacts to support us (the right people).
4. Seek change/ transformation
5. Identify challenges and methods of overcoming them.
6. Find a common voice
7. Represent ourselves - Be an active participant of the transformation and change.

Issues

The discussions that took place in three groups where the youth were asked to identify issues, as broken down into challenges and needs produced a group of closely connected matter.

These can be summarised in the following points



1. Need to access to education
2. Need for correct documentation and the unclear rules of accessing legal/residential documents.
3. Need for stability
4. Need to be heard
5. Sense of judgement, discrimination and exclusion

It is important to note that the majority of the youth in this consultation group are in school (those that are working sadly did not attend).

Directly transcribed from their input we find

- Rights
- Documentation
- “Transparency” and “Unclear rules”
- Access to/Education
- To be heard
- Racism
- Ignorance

- “Provide us work” and “More Job Opportunities”
- Need for a place to live
- Financial Problems
- “Hobbies” and Time for “Social Life”
- Courses
- English

One particular group focused in depth on the problems the individuals encountered in relation to access to further Education in particular the University of Malta where they noted incoherent processes and a general lack of support and knowledge from the administration, resulting in hindering access rather than supporting it.

It is worth stating that the issues identified are very much aligned with those that emerged previously in the October pilot and in other consultations in the GRYC process. Note the repeated issues of Transparency, Educational Opportunities and Basic Needs.

The main Issues identified nationally were thus
Access to Rights and Documentation
Incoherent Rules and Processes
No support in accessing education



“They don’t hear us”

“There is a lack of respect- we are extra and not welcome”

“I need someone to hear my voice and my issues

“I need the right to live, and the right to my rights in Malta

“I am not sure I will study after now”

“Racist in class in my religion and my colour sometimes”

Impacts

When asked to focus on ranking the identified challenges from the highest/lowest priority using the provided structure the groups came up with the following results

Participants group 1:

1. Support for education which is linked to finances. Therefore creating stability to study.
2. Financial support- No access to labor market; Renting a flat becomes impossible.
3. One cannot study, work and still get social benefits. In order to obtain social benefits, one cannot work- but social benefits aren't enough to sustain rent and study so one must work; leads to losing social benefits.
4. The ability to become part of the community is difficult (sharing this information with others is hard).
5. Stipend is reduced from social benefits.
6. The lack of access to all the above becomes frustrating.



Participants group 2:

1. The lack of clarity of the rules- Not knowing who the right people to speak to are.
2. The process of getting any form of access (working documents, access to university or other forms of study) is long.
3. Obtaining the right form of documentation is difficult
4. Financial support- The difficult of paying bills while studying. Balancing all commitments without the financial backing.
5. English language course is too expensive.

Participants group 3:

1. Having access to rights is dependent on the right documentation. If one doesn't have financial documents, than one does not have proper documents. There is a lack of transparency. There are no reasons given when refused. This makes it difficult to reapply.
2. Education is necessary and access to any education institution is difficult.
3. Lack of space to be heard.
4. Access to housing- Rent is too high.
5. The false impression of having access to work.
6. Access to English language course- is difficult and costly.
7. Access to hobbies and courses that are both for pleasure and improving skills (instances of discrimination against girls in the hijab joining the basketball team during games).

During debriefing we discussed the participants' difficulty with the activity; there was a shared feeling that they all had different experiences and background, and more often than not one sees issues and challenges from their own point of view. Carrying out this exercise allows for collective approaches and opinions, and while one cannot make one single challenge equally a priority for all, there was already a desire to act collectively upon issues that are brought up, due to their direct or indirect impact, now or in the future on them and others in similar situations.

Solutions

The three issues identified as priority areas for the exercise were as stated

- Access to Rights and Documentation
- Incoherent Rules and Processes
- No Support in Accessing education

Each group was asked to identify solutions and specifically “How would you respond” and “How would you solve the challenge”

Solutions elaborated in relation to ‘Access to rights and Documentation’ included

- Having to know the problems in detail
- “do as much as you can do”
- Getting to the right place to solve the problem
- Contacting organisations to help with this
- “Keep calm Don’t Panic”
- Understand the procedure
- Know who are the right people and how to contact them
- Access to NGOs who may help to solve this
- Know what to say and how to say it
- Make the process easier



Solutions elaborated in relation to ‘Incoherent Rules and Processes’ included

- Share information with other refugees that need it
- Make a group to tackle misleading information and make it clear
- Ask others who know information about this issue
- “Keep calm and focus on what you came for”
- Get access to Higher authorities - you have to know how.
- Cooperate together as a group and tackle the same task
- “Keep focused”
- Find a lawyer to help
- Train employees
- Need to be well informed of the rules and regulations. Knowledge is key.

Solutions elaborated in relation to ‘No Support in Accessing education’ include

- “Don’t give up keep trying”
- Financial support made available even if you are working
- NGOs and social support
- Easy access to certification
- English extra classes
- Financing education and financial support
- Affordable price
- Try to get work
- Do initial exams (referred to exams to access courses)
- Exemptions from fees

- “Try and find another way”

In summary there was a shared feeling that identifying common problems could help empower oneself through having others who shared the same situation. This was a feeling carried forward by participants in the October 2015 pilot into this activity. The mutual support network that is created, even as moral and psychological support this provides was reiterated regularly. Conversations focused greatly on the need for making contacts and focusing on developing the individuals and group’s human capital and the value of targeting the right person or organisation for the right information

Discussions also highlighted the limited availability for solutions within current structures and institutions. The obstacles to accessing tertiary education specifically at university have been removed for Maltese but not for foreigners. Thus the solution of an introductory course or an examination system for entry. There was discussion of the need in the maltese educational system for a third party that would regulate this in order to ensure that this is fair.

Many of the individuals in groups touched on the need to find support (NGO or otherwise) to support with funds to assist refugees to access the educational system, to assist with advocacy, and requesting and acting for change. As for additional support, particularly in relation to processes there was a lot of talk of the need to get legal counsel, whilst also reiterating the need to get well informed. In one group it was stated “empowering refugees would help Malta-‘I am here’. “

The youth expressed the need and the desire to brainstorm with others who are familiar with their issues, since there is strength in numbers rather than addressing the issue alone as this does not create solutions; ‘together we can achieve’.

Yet again alignment with other consultations can be found in the stress placed on

- The importance of information sharing
- The need to establish or identify open channels of communication
- The importance of Networks

Solutions proposed by the youth all sought to see tangible change, reflecting a very matter of fact and pragmatic attitude collectively and individually.

The role of youth

Note. The debriefing session for the World Cafe extended greatly out of time, and hence the session on the Role of Youth was narrowed into an action based facilitated discussion to bring the points from the previous session.

When looking into concrete actions and their role as youth in bringing positive change the outcomes that emerged from the conversations brought concrete actions and proposed solutions.

- The **need to be informed** and aware of all the processes that cause the problems listed throughout the day are very important.
- There was a proposal to create a refugee youth organization
 - This would be an organization that is supported by NGOs and advocate for the needs and challenges of youth.
 - The organization would be the 'first point of contact' one where all refugees can use as a base to collect/share information until a strong database can be created.

This idea generated further solution thoughts and the following activities were discussed

- As youth that are informed their role would be to offer new arriving refugee youth or other people an information point and guiding/orientation services
- The organization can represent refugees particularly youth and support in communication and advocacy efforts.
- The organisation will partner with NGOs who support its causes
- Another activity identified in the light of issues of limited information availability would be to collect information from other refugees through surveys to identify their problems and then generate solutions after.

“Know the right place to go , Knowing where to go and Speak with right person”

“All refugees must be a part of a team to help current and future refugees”

“We need to learn how to communicate so that as a group we can be focused on advocacy.”

Challenges to youth participation

In a number of the discussions that took place throughout the day (in particular in the Circles of Influence exercise) there was a shared opinion of the distance which the youth felt from their surrounding communities and with a number of organisations and structures surrounding them. The tone of discussion highlighted a shared sense of detachment and isolation from peers both from the local and their national community. Few found support in their national communities.

There was a nearness expressed towards the organisations that are supporting the current youth initiative and future endeavours, including a number of NGOs operating in the area of Forced Migration in Malta. Institutions, communities (even national), peers and particularly the UN, other than individual figures were distant entities that the youth felt they could not relate to.

The matters discussed in the early stages of the day where a number of youth felt discriminated based on race, in certain cases language, and the feeling of ignorance and judgement were significant issues in relation to participation in social and recreational activities. The example of the exclusion of girls wearing the hijab during competitive sports was raised a number of times. An additional obstacle to participation was the



need to balance all life's commitments; earning a living, renting accommodation, following a course, being an active youth and finding time for hobbies and socialising is difficult. The youth feel like they have many more challenges than their peers to face. Notwithstanding these may be challenges they are not hindering them completely from doing all the above. The challenge was just expressed as a difficulty they all share.

Next Steps / Future actions

The Malta Youth have committed to...

- Create a programme whereby SPARK 15 becomes the entity to run the drop in centre and provides information to newly arrived refugee youth
- Consider the idea of turning the initiative into a stand-alone NGO
- Continue awareness raising and campaigns as SPARK 15
- Build a network of support beyond the organisations that currently back the youth initiative (schools, youth groups, other youth)
- Get informed and well trained on services and procedures relevant for Refugee Youth in Malta
- Continue to consult and participate in consultations relating to youth and particularly refugee youth
- Request appointments with institutions and other stakeholders who currently 'feel far away'.
- Build a network of local youths and youth organisations
- Share the consultation report with specific stakeholders e.g. share debates and recommendations on access to education problems with the ministry of education and national youth agency



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