



WOMEN'S  
REFUGEE  
COMMISSION



UNHCR  
The UN Refugee Agency



GRYC

# “ WE BELIEVE in youth ”

Global Refugee Youth Consultations  
Final Report, November 2016



## PROJECT DONORS



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These and other national and international organizations have dedicated staff time, funding, and other resources to lead or support national consultations and follow-up actions: Action Africa Help Zambia (AAHZ), Amnesty International, ARSIS Association for the Social Support of Youth, Asylum Access Thailand (AAT), Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM), Children and Women Trust (CWT), COBURWAS International Youth Organisation to Transform Africa (CIYOTA), Corporación Humor y Vida (HyV), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Film Aid, Fondation Orient-Occident (FOO), “Hope for Children” UNCRC Policy Center, Integra Foundation, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Kopin, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN Australia), New Zealand Red Cross, New Zealand Refugee Youth Council (NZRYC), One Third Sweden, Organisation for Friendship in Diversity (OFD), Plan International Germany, Princess Basma Youth Resource Centre (PBYRC), Refugee Council of Australia, Refugee Support Center (RSC-MUDEM), Rural Empowerment and

Institutional Development (REPID), Secondary School in Hérouville Saint-Clair, Spark 15, Swiss Foundation of the International Social Service, Technical Assistance Inc. (TAI), Terre des Hommes France, France-Terre d’Asile Caen, Terre des Hommes International Federation, Terre des Hommes Association Locale 68, Terre des Hommes Schweiz, World Vision Chad, World Vision Kenya, World Vision Zambia, and Xavier Project.

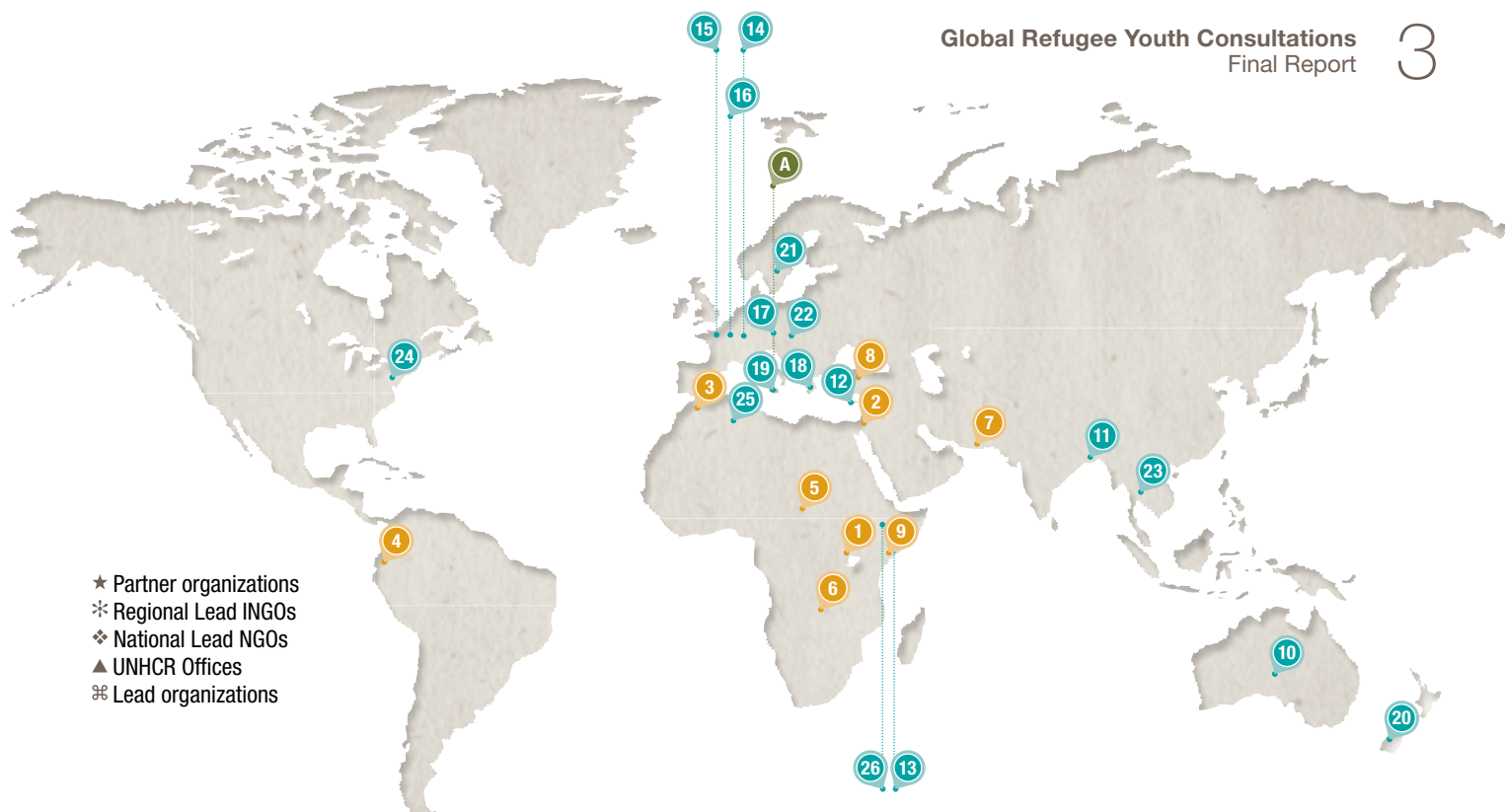
UNHCR staff in the following offices worked hard to make the consultations possible and to support follow up: UNHCR Algeria - Tindouf and country office, UNHCR Chad country office, UNHCR Ecuador country office, UNHCR Ethiopia county office, UNHCR Jordan country office, UNHCR Kenya - Kakuma, Dadaab, and country office, UNHCR Malta country office, UNHCR Morocco country office, UNHCR Pakistan - Peshawar and country office, UNHCR Turkey country office, UNHCR Uganda country office, UNHCR Zambia country office, and UNHCR Sub Office Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh.

Many individuals generously gave their time, energy and insights to this initiative. A huge thanks to each of the GRYC participants who shared their experiences, analyses, and ideas with such openness, wisdom, and creativity. Special thanks to the staff at UNHCR and WRC who worked hard behind the scenes to make the GRYC possible and to the facilitators, translators, and volunteers who helped to make each consultation run smoothly. Thanks also to the GRYC Advisory Committee for their dedication and commitment since the project’s inception.<sup>2</sup> Finally, thanks to the GRYC Team: Nick Sore and Rachael Reilly planned, led, and supported the GRYC throughout its duration; Kathryn Becher developed the methodology used for the national consultations and coordinated and led them; Leila Lohman provided essential project support, data management, and coordination throughout the project; and Kate Mahoney coordinated the global consultation and prepared the final report with the support and wise inputs from the organizations and individuals noted above.



<sup>1</sup> The Youth and Adolescents in Emergencies Advocacy Group (YAE Group) includes representatives from more than 20 humanitarian organizations that are committed to achieving better outcomes for young people in humanitarian situations. For more information about the activities of the YAE Group please see [<http://www.yaegroup.org/>].

<sup>2</sup> The GRYC Advisory Committee includes the following organizations and individuals: UNHCR (Co-Chair), Nick Sore; WRC (Co-Chair), Rachael Reilly; Youth and Adolescents in Emergencies Advocacy Group Co-Chair, Settlement Services International, Australia, Dor Achiek; World Vision International (Africa Lead), Laura Bennison/Paul Newnham; Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) (Asia-Pacific Lead), Julia Mayerhofer; RET International (Americas Lead), Marina Anselme; Save the Children (MENA Lead), Natalia Tapies; Independent Youth Expert, Jane Lowicki-Zucca; and Youth Representatives, Foni Joyce, Farah Abdi, and Aime Kalangwa.



- ★ Partner organizations
- \* Regional Lead INGOs
- ❖ National Lead NGOs
- ▲ UNHCR Offices
- ⌘ Lead organizations

## Refugee Youth Consultations Locations and Partners

### PROJECT DESIGN WORKSHOP

#### A. Malta

- ★ Organisation for Friendship in Diversity (OFD) / Integra / UNHCR Malta country office

### NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS

#### 1. Uganda

- \* World Vision International / Kenya / Uganda
- ❖ COBURWAS International Youth Organisation to Transform Africa (CIYOTA)
- ▲ UNHCR Uganda country office

#### 2. Jordan

- \* Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) / Save the Children
- ❖ Princess Basma Youth Resource Centre (PBYRC)
- ▲ UNHCR Jordan country office

#### 3. Morocco

- \* N/A
- ❖ Fondation Orient-Occident (FOO)
- ▲ UNHCR Morocco country office

#### 4. Ecuador

- \* RET International
- ❖ Corporación Humor y Vida (HyV)
- ▲ UNHCR Ecuador country office

#### 5. Chad

- \* World Vision West Africa
- ❖ World Vision Chad
- ▲ UNHCR Chad country office

#### 6. Zambia

- \* World Vision International
- ❖ Action Africa Help Zambia (AAHZ) / World Vision Zambia
- ▲ UNHCR Zambia country office

#### 7. Pakistan

- \* Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN)
- ❖ Children and Women Trust (CWT) / Rural Empowerment and Institutional Development (REPID)
- ▲ UNHCR Pakistan Peshawar and country office

#### 8. Turkey

- \* Plan International / Save the Children
- ❖ Refugee Support Center (RSC -MUDEM) / ASAM (implementing partner)
- ▲ UNHCR Turkey country office

#### 9. Kenya

- \* NRC / DRC / Film Aid / Xavier Project
- ❖ World Vision Kenya
- ▲ UNHCR Kenya country office

### TOOLKIT CONSULTATIONS

#### 10. Australia

- ⌘ Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN Australia) / Refugee Council of Australia

#### 11. Bangladesh

- ⌘ UNHCR Sub Office Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh / Technical Assistance Inc. (TAI)

#### 12. Cyprus

- ⌘ UNCRC Policy Center "Hope For Children"

#### 13. Dadaab Kenya

- ⌘ RET International / UNHCR Sub Office Dadaab, Kenya

#### 14. Alsace France

- ⌘ Terre des Hommes International Federation represented by Terre des Hommes France along with the participation of Terre des Hommes Association Locale 68

#### 15. Normandy France

- ⌘ Terre des Hommes France (representative office in Normandy), France-Terre d'Asile Caen / secondary school in Hérouville Saint-Clair

#### 16. Paris France

- ⌘ Terre des Hommes France

#### 17. Germany

- ⌘ Plan International Germany

#### 18. Greece

- ⌘ ARSIS Association for the Social Support of Youth

#### 19. Malta

- ⌘ Organisation for Friendship in Diversity (OFD), Integra Foundation, UNHCR Malta country office, Spark 15, Kopin

#### 20. New Zealand

- ⌘ New Zealand Red Cross and the New Zealand Refugee Youth Council (NZRYC)

#### 21. Sweden

- ⌘ One Third Sweden

#### 22. Switzerland

- ⌘ Terre des hommes schweiz / Swiss Foundation of the International Social Service

#### 23. Thailand

- ⌘ APRRN, Asylum Access, Amnesty International, JRS

#### 24. USA

- ⌘ Vulnerable Minors Working Group (VMWG) of Refugee Council USA (RCUSA)

#### 25. Algeria

- ⌘ UNHCR Algeria, Tindouf and country office

#### 26. Ethiopia

- ⌘ UNHCR Ethiopia Country Office / Jesuit Refugee Service / Plan International / Danish Refugee Council

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Seldom consulted,** frequently overlooked, and often unable to fully participate in decision making, the talents, energy, and potential of refugee youth—young people aged 15-24 years old<sup>3</sup>—remain largely untapped. This must change. Refugee youth want the same things young people everywhere want: to be consulted, to be listened to, to contribute, to engage, and to be part of solutions. They want opportunities, education, employment, and inclusion.



## **UNHCR and the Women’s Refugee Commission (WRC)**

undertook the Global Refugee Youth Consultations (GRYC) to amplify youth “voices” in decisions that affect them. The GRYC included 1,267 young people who participated in 56 national or sub-national consultations held in 22 countries between October 2015 and June 2016.<sup>4</sup> The GRYC were the beginning of a process—a process that must continue to develop the leadership, capacity, and futures of refugee youth everywhere. This Executive Summary highlights the outcomes of the GRYC process—Seven Core Actions for Refugee Youth (Core Actions), and ten challenges for refugee youth—and summarizes recommendations for the full range of actors engaged in humanitarian response—including States, multilateral organizations, international and national civil society organizations, traditional and

<sup>3</sup> The GRYC have defined youth as young people aged 15-24 years old.

<sup>4</sup> The Summary Reports for the national and sub-national consultations are available at [[www.unhcr.org/youth-consultations](http://www.unhcr.org/youth-consultations)].



non-traditional donors, and community and youth groups (humanitarian actors)—to take the Core Actions forward. The full report—“We Believe in Youth”<sup>5</sup>—provides more detail on these outcomes and recommendations.

## TEN CHALLENGES for Refugee Youth:

**Through the consultations,** young refugees analysed causes and impacts of the difficulties they face. Although the context of each country is specific, and the dynamics of displacement are regionally distinct, the challenges that refugee youth identified are remarkably consistent. During the consultations, participants examined how these challenges are interconnected.



“We’re just *calling* on the partners, governmental representatives, everybody out there: ‘Give us more space’... Youth are powerful and capable of running their own projects.”

<sup>5</sup> The title for this report was inspired by a song written by Elvis Ewabanga Dubois, a refugee from DRC who participated in the GRYC Uganda national consultation and the GRYC global consultation in Geneva. The song celebrates the power of youth working together and has become an anthem for GRYC participants. The lyrics have been incorporated into the back cover of this report and are available at [[http://www.yaegroup.org/uploads/5/2/0/1/52017711/i\\_believe\\_in\\_youth\\_lyrics.pdf](http://www.yaegroup.org/uploads/5/2/0/1/52017711/i_believe_in_youth_lyrics.pdf)].



## TEN CHALLENGES for Refugee Youth



### Difficulties with legal recognition and obtaining personal documents

Youth stressed the challenges, complexities, and delays in the processes to obtain asylum and related legal documents from UNHCR and/or local authorities, and the serious implications of not having them.



### Difficulty in accessing quality learning, education, and skill-building opportunities

Young refugees consistently identified the difficulty of obtaining recognition for their existing qualifications and accessing quality learning, formal education, and skill-building opportunities as a serious challenge.



### Discrimination, racism, xenophobia, and “culture clash”

Young refugees noted discrimination, racism, and xenophobia across all regions and emphasized how it can leave them feeling isolated and marginalized.



### Few youth employment and livelihood opportunities

Refugee youth emphasized they would rather work than depend on humanitarian aid and expressed frustration at the limited employment and livelihood opportunities available to them.



### Gender inequality, discrimination, exploitation, and violence—including for LGBTI youth

Young refugees highlighted concerns about gender inequality and discrimination as challenges in and of themselves, but also as underlying causes of sexual exploitation and gender-based violence (SGBV), including domestic violence, child and forced marriage, sexual assault, and rape.



### Poor access to youth sensitive health care—including psychosocial support

Refugee youth highlighted a lack of access to quality health care as a major concern and particularly noted the need for youth-sensitive sexual and reproductive health care and psychosocial support.



### Lack of safety, security, and freedom of movement

Refugee youth expressed concerns about safety, security, and freedom of movement linked to xenophobia and difficulty with documents. In some locations, they also highlighted police harassment as well as arrest and detention.



### Challenges for unaccompanied youth

Refugees stressed the specific protection and practical challenges for unaccompanied youth, including the difficult transition and a lack of preparation for those who turn 18, “age out”, and are no longer afforded additional protection and support, but often still need guidance and assistance as well as access to rights and protection.



### Lack of opportunities to participate, be engaged, or access decision makers

Youth identified a lack of empowerment and engagement opportunities as factors that limit youth involvement in decision making. They have few opportunities to analyse issues, devise solutions, share their ideas with decision makers, and be heard.



### Lack of information about asylum, refugee rights, and available services

In all the consultations, young refugees highlighted challenges related to the lack of relevant, honest, and transparent information about the asylum process, refugee rights, available services, and the society and culture of their country of asylum.



## SEVEN CORE ACTIONS for Refugee Youth:

Throughout the GRYC process, participants brainstormed solutions to the challenges they face, identified how young refugees could take actions themselves, and made recommendations regarding the types of support they need. Despite living in different contexts, the participants consistently suggested a similar package of interconnected actions that could address multiple challenges. The hundreds of actions and recommendations that participants developed during the consultations were consolidated thematically by youth to formulate “Seven Core Actions for Refugee Youth” (Core Actions). The Core Actions are intended as a framework to help humanitarian actors in working with and for refugee youth, and to shape youth-specific policy, guidance, and programmes.

### Core Action 1: *Empower* refugee youth through meaningful engagement:

Humanitarian actors must work to empower young refugees by facilitating opportunities for youth to voice their ideas, engage in decision making processes, and develop their leadership potential.

### Core Action 2: *Recognize*, utilize, and develop refugee youth capacities and skills:

Humanitarian actors must recognize and build upon young refugees’ existing knowledge, skills, capacities, and qualifications; support access to quality and inclusive learning opportunities including formal and non-formal education, skills building, and jobs training; and facilitate employment and livelihood opportunities.

### Core Action 3: *Ensure* refugee youth-focused protection:

Humanitarian actors must engage young refugees in protecting themselves and their peers, and make sure that young refugees have access to personal documentation, freedom of movement, and protective services that are attuned to their needs and ensure their safety.

### Core Action 4: *Support* refugee youth physical and emotional well-being:

Humanitarian actors must support young refugees to access and be involved in services and activities that support their mental, emotional, and physical health and happiness, and their ability to engage and develop socially, physically, spiritually, and emotionally with their peers, family, and community.





### **Core Action 5: Facilitate** refugee youth networking and information sharing:

Humanitarian actors must facilitate two-way sharing of accurate, honest, age-appropriate, and context-specific information with young refugees through channels and structures that are easily accessible.

### **Core Action 6: Reinforce** refugee youth as connectors and peace builders:

Humanitarian actors must channel and reinforce young refugees' abilities to build connections and relationships across social, cultural, linguistic, political, and other differences, and support them to contribute meaningfully to peacebuilding processes.

### **Core Action 7: Generate** data and evidence on refugee youth to promote accountability to youth:

Humanitarian actors must gather quality disaggregated data on youth across different sectors; this is essential for planning and designing youth programming and for being accountable to youth.

## Summary of recommendations for **HUMANITARIAN ACTORS:**

The type of engagement demonstrated by the GRYC must become institutionalized through the development of frameworks and guidance on consultation and collaboration with youth. But in order for that engagement and consultation to be meaningful, it is essential to take the concerns, ideas, solutions, and recommendations of youth seriously enough to use them. During the national consultations, youth identified stakeholders relevant within their context. These included UNHCR and other UN agencies, international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), host government authorities, and donors as well as private sector organizations, foundations, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations (CBOs), and sports and cultural foundations. Section 4 provides more detailed recommendations and suggests how humanitarian and other actors—including UNHCR and sister UN agencies, governments, donors, non-governmental organizations, and youth themselves—can take steps to implement the Core Actions. Essential aspects of those recommendations include the following, which are relevant for all actors:

- Facilitate opportunities for refugee and host-country youth to share experiences and work together, such as through national youth organizations, national youth strategies, and national sports and cultural initiatives.
- Proactively and responsively work with youth to identify ways for youth to be involved in humanitarian protection and assistance programmes, including through youth-led initiatives.
- Ensure, through policy and guidance, that governments and humanitarian actors, including UNHCR and other UN agencies, NGOs, and youth themselves engage the hardest-to-reach young people, including unaccompanied children and youth, adolescent girls and young women, married girls, youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or intersexual (LGBTI), sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV) survivors, and young people with disabilities, and specifically consider them in programmatic responses.
- Expand access to legal employment for refugee youth and to income generating activities that foster self-reliance for young refugees and their families.
- Expand initiatives to make education and other learning opportunities accessible to refugee youth, including financial assistance to support access to tertiary education and recognition of refugees' educational certifications from their country of origin and other countries they have lived in.
- Facilitate the acquisition of personal identification documents, including machine readable Convention Travel Documents, and ensure that all security services are well-trained in refugee rights and appropriate, youth-friendly procedures.
- Support the collection of data on young refugees, disaggregated by age and sex, and facilitate the development of evidenced-based programming for youth.
- Establish a refugee youth advisory council to advise UNHCR on youth issues and represent young refugees globally and link with other global youth forums and networks to ensure that refugee youth are included on global agendas and that refugee youth voices are heard.
- Support implementation of the Core Actions by creating funding streams and calls for proposals focused on implementation of the Core Actions, including dedicated funding for youth-led initiatives.
- Fund or support collaborative efforts to develop operational guidance and policies for UNHCR and other UN agencies, NGOs, youth-led organizations, and other humanitarian actors to further elaborate the Core Actions in refugee settings.

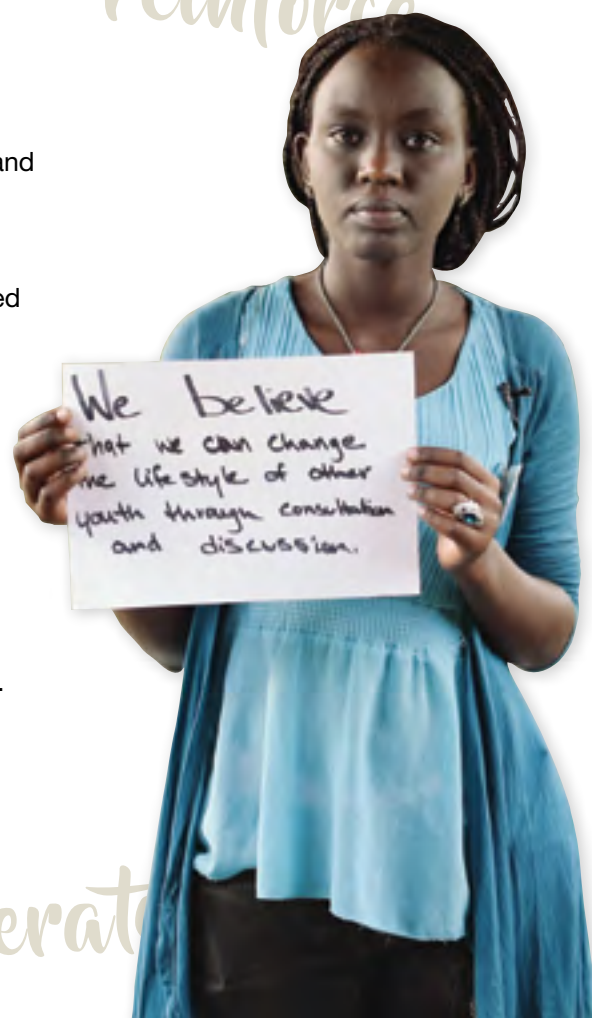
facilitate

ensure

empower

support

reinforce



generate

# 1. WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO CONSULT WITH REFUGEE YOUTH



**There are more refugees today**—16 Million<sup>6</sup>—than at any point since the end of World War II. Globally, the number of adolescents and youth is also at an all-time high, and young people often form the majority of the population of countries affected by armed conflict.<sup>7</sup>

**Most humanitarian organizations**, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), have limited data on refugee youth (aged 15-24), so reliable statistics on the actual number of refugee youth globally are not available. However, the “youth bulge” in countries of origin, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, suggests that this age group forms a large proportion of the refugee population.<sup>8</sup> Conflict and forced displacement impact young people during what is a transformative time in their cognitive and physiological development. On the cusp of adulthood, but with limited prospects for education or employment, few opportunities to develop their talents, and no certainty for the future, **young refugees are often unable to prepare for their life ahead.**

<sup>6</sup> There are 16.1 million under UNHCR’s mandate, or a total of 21.3 million if Palestinians under the UNRWA mandate are also included. From “Global Trends; Forced Displacement in 2015”, (UNHCR) July 2016 [<http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>].

<sup>7</sup> Preamble to the UNSC Resolution 2250. [<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2250>].

<sup>8</sup> As of 2015, 1.2 billion youth aged 15-24 live on our planet. This accounts for one of every six people worldwide. That number is projected to increase by 7 percent to 1.3 billion by 2030. United Nations Population Division/Department of Economic and Social Affairs at [<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/YouthPOP.pdf>].

Globalization, information technology, and the inter-connectedness that social media facilitates have fuelled young people’s awareness of events, conflicts, and opportunities all over the planet. It should come as no surprise that young refugees become frustrated with their situations in countries of asylum and consider onward movement. The marginalization, isolation, and hardship of forced displacement can also increase young refugees’ vulnerability to violence including sexual violence, exploitation, substance abuse, radicalization, and recruitment into gangs or armed groups.<sup>9</sup>

**Marginalization and vulnerability are not the full story.** With their drive, energy, entrepreneurship, language abilities, technological savvy, and other capabilities and skills, **refugee youth play essential roles in supporting their peers, families, and communities.** They self-organize, form groups, provide peer-to-peer support, and provide vital community services in formal and informal ways. Refugee youth are acutely aware of the importance of peacebuilding and the value of quality leadership, and they are keen to do their part.

<sup>9</sup> “Why Young Syrians Choose to Fight: Vulnerability and Resilience to Recruitment by Violent Extremist Groups in Syria”, by Meg Aubrey, Rosi Aubrey, Frances Rodrick, and Caroline Brooks, International Alert. 2016 available at [http://international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Syria\_YouthRecruitmentExtremistGroups\_EN\_2016.pdf]. This article presenting research on vulnerability and resilience to recruitment by violent extremist groups found that the main factors that drive vulnerability are lack of economic opportunity; disruptive social context and experiences of violence displacement, trauma, and loss; deprivation of personal psychological needs for efficacy, autonomy, and purpose; and degradation of education infrastructure and opportunities to learn. UNSC Resolution 2250 recognizes the rise of radicalization and violent extremism amongst youth and stresses the importance of addressing conditions and factors that contribute to this radicalization. [http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2250].

## Refugee Youth: Facts & Perceptions

As part of the consultations, refugee and national youth explored facts and perceptions about refugees and youth. This table summarizes their observations.

### PERCEPTIONS

#### REFUGEES ARE PERCEIVED AS...

trouble makers, diseased, terrorists, hit men, thieves, narcotics traffickers, prostitutes, and opportunists who are taking jobs and services away from locals.

### FACTS

**REFUGEES ARE ACTUALLY...** People who did not want to leave their homes but were forcibly displaced due to conflict and/or a well-founded fear of persecution. Refugees have often suffered trauma and/or lost loved ones in their home countries or during their journeys to find safety. Refugees often struggle with legal, cultural, and language barriers in an effort to realise their rights and access basic services. Refugees have many skills and when they are permitted to work, run businesses or participate in other ways they contribute economically and culturally to host communities.

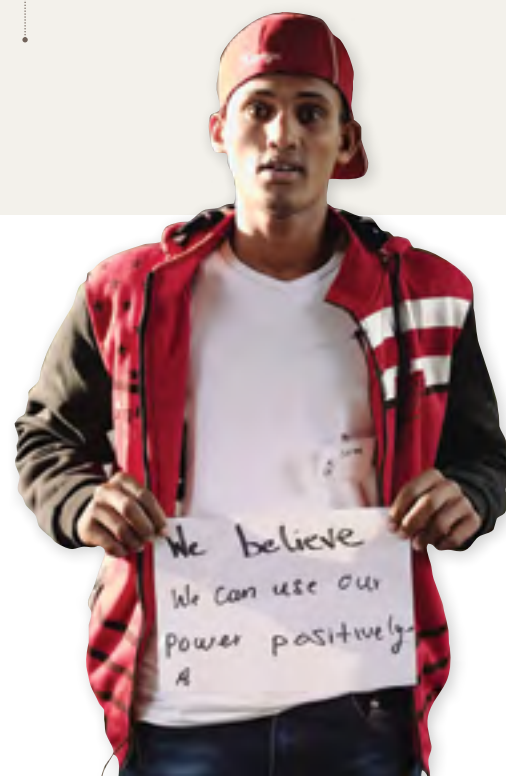
### PERCEPTIONS

**YOUTH ARE PERCEIVED AS...** lazy, delinquent, disrespectful, criminal, substance abusers, irresponsible, unable to be involved in decision making, inexperienced, and ignorant.

### FACTS

**YOUTH ARE ACTUALLY...** full of energy, enthusiasm, and lots of good ideas. They are keen to learn new skills like languages and social media, and want to make friends and network, but they also want to take on responsibility and be part of positive change.

Youth are capable of working hard but sometimes lack the resources and skills to implement their ideas on their own and need guidance and support from older adults.



## PURPOSE of this report

**This report** is meant for humanitarian practitioners and policy makers—UNHCR and sister UN agencies, international non-governmental organizations, national organizations, civil society, government authorities, community-based organizations, donors, and youth—to share the outcomes of GRYC, raise awareness of the difficulties that refugee youth face, share examples of youth-led action, highlight the importance of engaging and empowering refugee youth, and suggest how organizations and governments could work with and for refugee youth. The substantive outcome of the GRYC is the “Seven Core Actions for Refugee Youth”, which are intended to shape youth-specific guidance, policy, and programmes.



The international community is recognising that **involving youth is essential in shaping lasting peace** and prosperity and thus the importance of processes targeting and led by young people. This is evidenced by the Baku Commitment to Youth Policies,<sup>10</sup> the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security,<sup>11</sup> and the World Humanitarian Summit’s Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action.<sup>12</sup> However, few humanitarian organizations have developed evidence-based programmes that take into account young people’s specific needs. This is not surprising given the lack of data as well as guidance and policy focused on quality programming for refugee youth. As a result, the services and support that young refugees need often fall in the gap between child and adult programming, and their needs are rarely met.<sup>13</sup> **There is a pressing need to reach out to refugee youth** and hear their ideas about the challenges they face, how they can play constructive roles supporting one another and their communities, and what support they need to shape positive futures. **UNHCR and WRC jointly undertook the Global Refugee Youth Consultations during 2015-2016 to work towards addressing this need.**



<sup>10</sup> [<http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Baku-commitment.pdf>]

<sup>11</sup> [<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2250>]

<sup>12</sup> [<http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/CompactforYoungPeopleinHumanitarianAction-FINAL-EDITED-VERSION1.pdf>]

<sup>13</sup> “A Global Review: UNHCR’s Engagement with Displaced Youth”, by Dr. Rosalind Evans and Claudia LaForte with Dr. Erida McAslan, Fraser Social Development Direct, (UNHCR) March 2013 [[www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)].

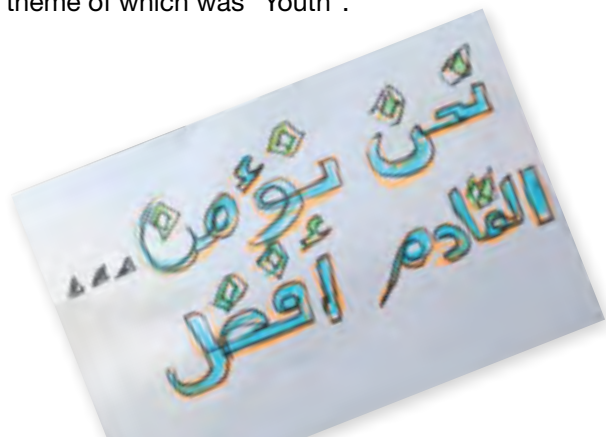


## 2. THE GLOBAL REFUGEE YOUTH CONSULTATIONS

65 national or sub-national consultations in  
23 countries between  
October 2015  
& June 2016

### What are the **GRYC**?

**The GRYC** included 65 national or sub-national consultations in 23 countries between October 2015 and June 2016. In June 2016, representatives from many of the national consultations came to Geneva to participate in a global consultation focused on sharing and consolidating the national consultations' findings. They also participated in the 2016 annual UNHCR-NGO Consultations, the overarching theme of which was "Youth".



## GRYC Participants: QUICK FACTS



**65** host-country youth

**36** participants who noted that they have a disability

Participants included young refugees who had left their countries between **one month** and **20 years ago**, as well as those who have been born as refugees

Approximately **58%** of participants were male and **42%** were female

**140** married youth and **114** youth with children

About **40%** of participants had completed **primary school**;

**37%** had completed or were enrolled in **secondary school**;

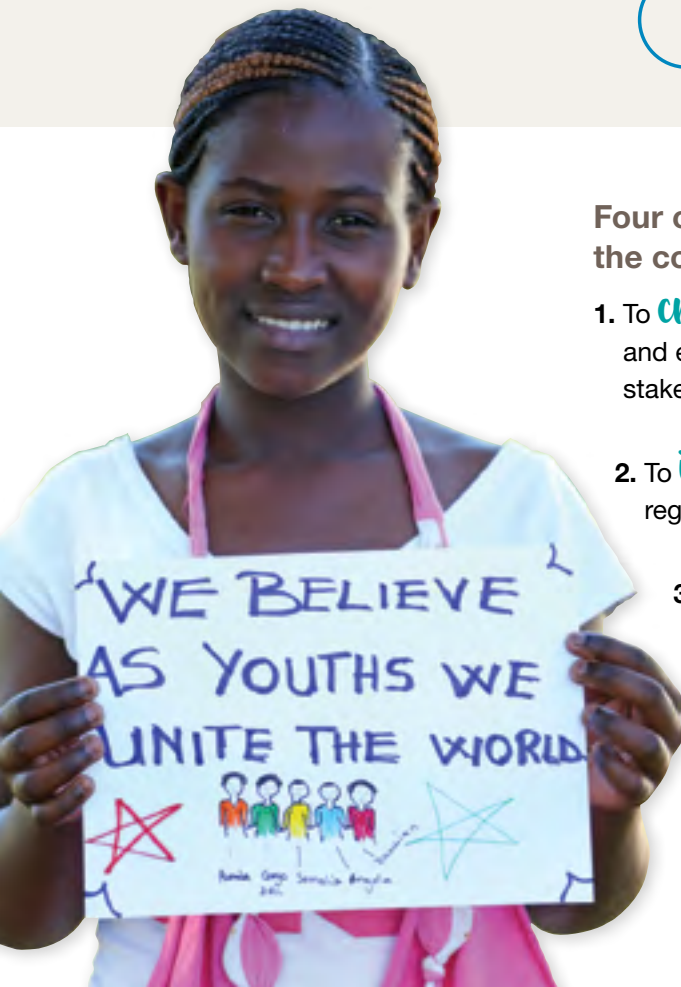
**10%** had completed or were enrolled in **undergraduate level tertiary education**;

**2%** had completed or were enrolled in **post-graduate education**;

**1%** reported that they are **illiterate or have had no schooling**; and

**10%** had participated in other **formal training**

About **20%** of youth reported **working** part- or full-time



### Four core GRYC objectives have underpinned the consultation process:

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.



## STRUCTURE of the GRYC

### National Consultations:

UNHCR and WRC developed a youth-friendly consultation methodology that uses participatory exercises to engage and support participants as they dissect and discuss the difficulties they face. The approach assists youth to discover their own solutions, while building their capacity to analyse and present information, and advocate with stakeholders on their own behalf. Using this approach, UNHCR and WRC, together with national and international NGO partners, ran ten four-day consultations that brought refugee and host-community youth together in Chad, Ecuador, Jordan, Kenya, Malta, Morocco, Pakistan, Turkey, Uganda, and Zambia. An abridged version of the consultation methodology, “A toolkit for holding consultations with young refugees”,<sup>14</sup> enabled NGO partners to run additional consultations in Algeria, Australia, Bangladesh, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Kenya, Malta, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, and the United States using a consistent approach.<sup>15</sup>



### Global Consultation:

The GRYC process culminated in a three-day global consultation in Geneva, which brought together 19 refugees and five host-country youth from the national consultations. The global consultation provided a structured forum for youth to share the findings of their national consultations, identify common regional challenges, highlight youth-led actions, and suggest solutions to the challenges identified. Finally, youth organized the many recommendations and actions that had been generated through the GRYC process into themes in order to formulate the Core Actions. The youth presented the regional challenges and the Core Actions at a meeting of UN, NGO, and government stakeholders.



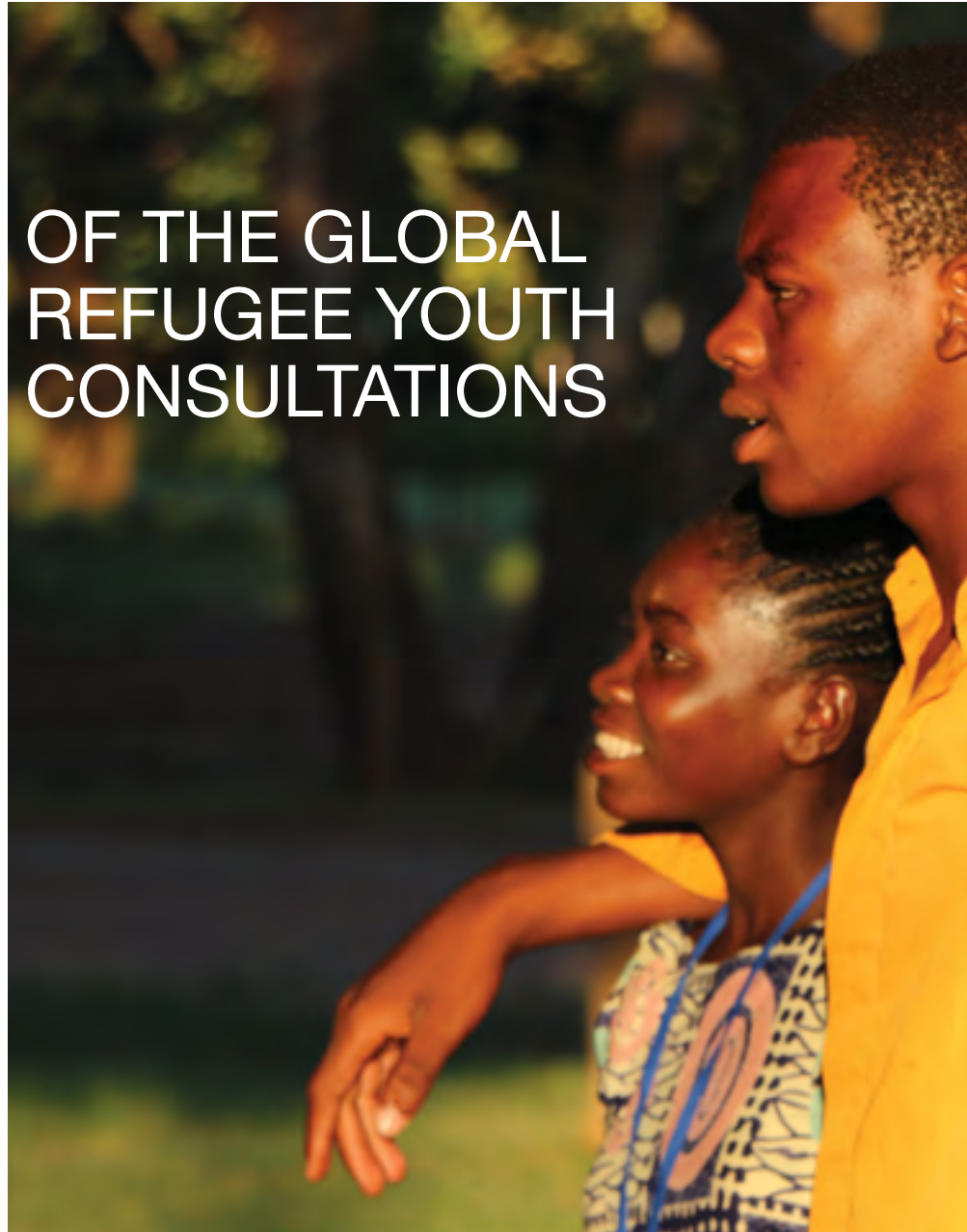
### GRYC Participants:

The Global Refugee Youth Consultations, both national and global, included refugees from 34 countries of origin living in camps, rural settlements, and cities as well as host-country youth. The consultations included persons with disabilities, individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or intersexual (LGBTI), unaccompanied children, individuals who are survivors and/or activists on issues related to SGBV and refugee youth leaders already contributing to their communities. The GRYC participants were as a group well-educated and multi-lingual, and the majority of them were already in leadership roles. In this sense, they were not representative of all refugee youth. However, they took their role as peer representatives very seriously; many of them brought forward concerns of their peers and they shared the consultation outcomes with them afterwards.

<sup>14</sup> “A toolkit for holding consultations with young refugees”, which explains the methodology used to run the consultations and includes detailed session plans and exercises is available at [[www.unhcr.org/youth-consultations](http://www.unhcr.org/youth-consultations)].

<sup>15</sup> Summary reports detailing the process, as well as the outcomes for each of the national consultations are available at [[www.unhcr.org/youth-consultations](http://www.unhcr.org/youth-consultations)].

### 3. OUTCOMES OF THE GLOBAL REFUGEE YOUTH CONSULTATIONS



**The main outcomes** of the GRYC process are the ten priority challenges for refugee youth and the Seven Core Actions for Refugee Youth as discussed on the following pages.

#### **TEN CHALLENGES** for Refugee Youth

**Through the consultation process**, young refugees identified and prioritized challenges to examine, analysing the causes and impacts of the difficulties that they face and often noting how they are interconnected. Although the context of each country is specific, and the dynamics of displacement and onward movements are regionally distinct, the difficulties that refugee youth identified are remarkably consistent across countries and regions. The following ten challenges were most consistently highlighted.



## Difficulty in accessing quality learning, formal education, and skill-building opportunities

**Across consultations**, the young people highlighted the difficulty of accessing quality learning, formal education, learning, and skill-building opportunities as one of the most serious challenges for refugee youth. Participants report that in some countries it is **hard for refugees to access learning opportunities, especially formal education due to non-recognition of refugee status**. Participants noted that even where refugees can legally access formal education they encounter other obstacles. Difficulty obtaining **recognition of education certificates** or records from countries of origin or other locations where they have studied was a barrier for some refugee youth. Youth also emphasized the language barrier as a factor that impedes access to formal education and other learning opportunities, and makes it difficult for young refugees to reach their academic potential and integrate socially. Refugees highlighted the particular difficulties that young refugees with disabilities have in accessing education. Refugees in all locations raised concerns about the **difficulties associated with accessing tertiary education and skills training**, and emphasized the importance of young people being able to freely choose what to study. **The cost of learning, including** ancillary fees for books, materials, or equipment, **is a serious obstacle in most locations** even where refugees technically have access to free education. Economic hardship and conflicting priorities at home often force young people to drop out of school to support their families. In all locations, young refugees noted the need for scholarships and other financing schemes.

Participants in all locations also highlighted the **quality of education available to both host-country and refugee youth as a challenge, and stressed the need for quality formal and non-formal learning opportunities**. Participants identified that a lack of investment in education for refugees results in overcrowding, teachers without training or qualifications, and inadequate school infrastructure. Youth noted that **teachers also often lack understanding of refugees' challenges and needs** and have unrealistic expectations of the ability of young refugees to adapt to curricula and classroom norms that are unfamiliar to them. Youth emphasized that when they are not able to develop their qualifications, skills, and capacities, it also impacts their communities. Youth without education and skills are not able to earn a living and contribute as fully to their communities and society.



“There is also an issue with language in public schools...due to language there is no *integration*.”



“A young population, poorly *educated* is like a time bomb.”





“They shouldn’t give us money. They should **show** the way. It is good to work all day and get tired.”



“The second problem was to find **legal documents**—it took me years... I want to study and I want to work and I need legal documents that give me an identity...”



## Few youth employment and livelihood opportunities

**Refugee youth emphasized** that they would much rather work than depend on humanitarian aid. They expressed frustration at the limited employment and livelihood opportunities available to them. Employment is particularly a challenge for youth living in urban or other non-camp contexts where refugees must support themselves. Concerns were raised about high fees and administrative **difficulties in obtaining work permits**, resulting in very few legal opportunities to work. In countries where refugees cannot work legally, young refugees explained that they often find themselves in **exploitative work situations**.

Even where they can work legally, young refugees often face **discrimination**. Young refugees and nationals noted bias against youth and refugees with regard to employment. Concerns were also raised that refugee youth are deliberately being overlooked during hiring processes. Youth participants highlighted difficulty learning the **language as an impediment to employment**. Many young refugees also noted the **difficulty of trying to understand the employment system, including norms and expectations**, as well as their rights as workers. Many young refugees found it challenging to access employment due to a **lack of recognition of education qualifications**. Young refugees in all regions are clear in describing the potential **impacts of unemployment for refugee youth**: poverty, homelessness, food insecurity, and criminal and illegal activities. They also stress that they would prefer to work and stay busy because idleness can lead to isolation, failure to integrate, substance abuse, mental health issues, and other risky behaviours.



## Difficulties obtaining legal recognition and personal documents

**In all consultations**, refugee youth stressed the challenges, complexities, and delays in the processes to obtain asylum and related legal and personal documents from UNHCR and/or national and local authorities. In many locations, the issue of documentation dominated discussions. Youth identified a **lack of information, not knowing who to speak to, and language barriers** as obstacles that can prevent new arrivals from understanding the administrative and legal system, and what is required to secure documentation. It was noted that refugees may be missing documents from their country of origin, which further slows the asylum process. Youth also cited **practical challenges and costs** because refugees have to travel to larger administrative centres to obtain some personal documents, such as work and study permits or birth certificates.

In all cases, refugee youth emphasized that these difficulties with documentation create multiple and far-reaching impacts because refugee documents are a prerequisite for accessing health care, shelter, and education; obtaining work and study permits; opening bank accounts (where allowed); purchasing SIM cards for mobile phones; and pursuing family reunification. Lack of documentation also makes already vulnerable people more susceptible to police harassment and exploitation. Young refugees explained that a lack of documents can result in anxiety about arrest and detention. They emphasized that the long delays and uncertainty related to the asylum application procedures are also extremely stressful.

### Lack of safety, security, and freedom of movement

**In many consultations**, refugee youth identified a lack of safety and security as a significant challenge. Young refugees were particularly concerned about **violence related to racism and xenophobia and** expressed fear of harm, harassment, or retribution as a reason for not going to the police. In some locations, **arrest and detention were major concerns**. Refugee youth stressed **difficulties with finding safe, appropriate, and affordable housing**. Some of those living in camps or transit centres noted a lack of privacy and security as concerns. Some young refugees who had lived in urban locations reported difficulty finding **safe shelter** and the risk of having to sleep on the street. Many young refugees living in camps reported that restrictions limit their movement outside of the camps and in some locations they expressed anxiety about the risk of deportation or refoulement. Again, young refugees explained that concerns about violence, xenophobia, deportation or police harassment leave them feeling anxious about leaving their accommodation, which can contribute to and compound feelings of isolation.

### Poor access to youth sensitive health care— including psychosocial support

**Refugee youth** highlighted access to comprehensive and quality health care as a major concern for themselves and their communities. They particularly noted the need for youth-sensitive sexual and reproductive health care and psychosocial support with strong outreach that includes peer-to-peer support. Many participants emphasized that young people do not have comprehensive information about **sexual and reproductive health** or access to **youth-friendly health centres**. As a result, they face challenges, such as early pregnancy, STDs including HIV, and other problems related to sexual and reproductive health.

Refugee youth in all regions noted **accessible psychosocial and psychological support** as a challenge, highlighting that youth are often uncomfortable to actively seek these kinds of support. They



“For *girls* “Police harassment has become a major issue... We are not safe while going to school.”



“I went to a counsellor who treated me like trash... We find it difficult to go to counsellors—we need more *youth-friendly* counsellors.”



stressed that there is a need for psychosocial services to reach out to youth in a sensitive and appropriate way, and in a language that they understand. Refugee youth also raised concerns about ongoing mental health related issues linked to their experiences of forced displacement and conflict, including torture, persistent fear, exposure to danger, the loss of and/or separation from family members, and ongoing discrimination. Youth across many locations highlighted the multiple **benefits of being involved in sports**, including the sense of belonging that being on a team brings as well as the physical and mental benefits of exercise, but they noted that young refugees can find it hard to access sports facilities or get involved with sports clubs. Consultation participants emphasized that mental health issues are exacerbated by the lack of opportunities to engage meaningfully in work or social activities. Participants also spoke about how unaddressed mental health issues can contribute to drug use, violence, and other negative coping strategies.



### Gender inequality, discrimination, exploitation, and violence—including for LGBTI youth

**Across the consultations**, young refugees consistently highlighted concerns about **underlying gender inequality and discrimination**, and explained that these issues are a challenge in and of themselves, but are also an underlying cause of sexual and gender-based violence including domestic violence, child and forced marriage, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, and rape. Participants in many locations highlighted **sexual violence** against refugee girls and young women as a serious security concern, such that they feel unsafe walking to school or participating in community activities. Youth also expressed concern about sexual exploitation in many “safe” settings, including schools and hospitals. Youth stressed that SGBV survivors face stigma and alienation and as a result many do not report the assault or seek help. Young refugees raised concerns about how discrimination can lead to the exclusion of girls and young women from education and other learning opportunities due to social attitudes and childcare responsibilities. Participants linked low levels of education for girls to a higher risk of **child and forced marriage**, which in turn further undermines girls’ education.



“LGBTI people are highly **disadvantaged**—often at risk in their own countries and in their countries of asylum. They do not have the chance to stand up for their rights.”

Refugee youth raised specific concerns about **discrimination and violence against LGBTI persons**. They highlighted that young LGBTI individuals are often at risk in their countries of origin and also in countries of asylum. They lack protection and security related to their gender identity and/or sexual orientation and may not have the support of their families or communities. As refugees, they are doubly or triply marginalized and lack safe spaces to build support systems.



## Challenges for unaccompanied youth

**Refugee youth** in all contexts highlighted that there are **specific protection and practical challenges for unaccompanied youth**, both those aged 15-17 years old who are eligible for legal protection and services as children, and those who are 18-24 years old and are no longer afforded that additional protection, guidance, and support, but often still need it. Unaccompanied adolescents and youth reported having a **difficult time understanding and accessing the information they need to apply for asylum and assistance**. They highlighted concerns that detention is a significant risk in some countries and that unaccompanied young people are at even greater risk of exploitation and violence while in detention. Young refugees in locations with legal guardianship frameworks indicated that it takes a long time to have a guardian appointed, and until this happens, they often do not have access to an adult whom they trust. Young refugees also expressed concern that unaccompanied young people who live in group facilities often have limited access to education and little to keep them busy. Many of them have emotional problems related to the conflicts that they fled, difficulties during their journeys, and being on their own.

Young refugees also **highlighted difficulties for youth, aged 18-24 years old, who are on their own and need help and protection**, but are no longer eligible for the support and protection afforded to “unaccompanied children”. They explained the challenges associated with **the abrupt transition that takes place when unaccompanied youth turn 18 (“age out”)** and are no longer entitled to family reunification or financial support, and face the risk of deportation or return to their country of origin. Youth participants stressed that information about “ageing out” needs to be provided in advance to better prepare them for how independent they are expected to be. All of the unaccompanied young people spoke about the difficulty of being apart from their families. Young refugees also highlighted that **complications and restrictions related to family** reunification, both within and between countries, is a pressing concern.



## Lack of information about asylum, refugee rights and available services

**In all the consultations**, young refugees highlighted the lack of relevant information about the asylum process, refugee rights, available services, and the society and culture of their country of asylum as a challenge. Many young refugees stressed that it is hard to understand administrative processes and that young refugees need to be able to readily access information upon arrival so they can understand what they need to do to regularise their status in order to access services and documentation. Refugee youth reported **difficulty in accessing**



“There are many unaccompanied boys on the streets because they don’t know what to do. They have no rules and no one is helping them to **integrate**. No one tells them how things work and especially no kind treatment or empathy.”

“Children under 18...their time is aimless...just eating and sleeping with nothing to do; they are **losing** their talents and their skills.”

“I left with an empty suitcase that was full of illusions... The first problem that I encountered, was not finding adequate **information** to build up my life again.”





“Lower the UNHCR office walls because they have become so hard for some of us to **climb**.”

“Sometimes NGOs may ask for our help, but they don’t **listen** to or act on our ideas or proposals.”

“When they see you are black they make you feel **different**.”

“I hide my identity most of the time as local people do not give **respect** to Afghani girls. They think they are cheap and have no values.”

“If we **engage** young people, there will be a positive impact on the next generation within communities.”



**the major NGOs or UNHCR** in order to get information or convey protection concerns. This lack of information flow fuels the perception of a lack of transparency in sharing realistic information about asylum applications or the resources and services available on the part of humanitarian actors. Youth explained that without accurate information, it is hard for young refugees to engage constructively with humanitarian actors or make decisions about everyday issues and their futures. This can lead to poor decisions and risky situations.



### Discrimination, xenophobia, and “culture clash”

**Young refugees** noted discrimination, racism, and xenophobia to a greater or lesser degree across all regions. They highlighted how it can leave them feeling **isolated and marginalized**. Refugee youth explained that they would like to meet and make friends with local young people, learn about the local culture, and share their own culture but they have difficulty overcoming **language and cultural barriers**.

Many young refugees emphasized the **racism** from host-country citizens or school mates and described how it undermined their feelings of safety, security, and well-being. Refugee youth identified **discrimination and bullying** as a challenge that dampens the spirit, affects them emotionally and mentally, and leads to **isolation** and depression. They expressed concern that a **lack of awareness and understanding of forced displacement** in the broader community also contributes to **bullying, stereotyping, and labelling**, which is reinforced by negative media stories. Young refugees highlighted that **cultural adjustment and “fitting in”** is a huge challenge. They talked about **identity**, the struggle to fit in, and the difficulty of being torn between new cultural norms and expectations of family at home.



### Lack of opportunities to participate, be engaged, or access decision makers

**Refugee and host-country youth** in all the consultations expressed frustration that youth are rarely involved in decisions that impact their personal lives or broader decision making processes in their communities. They also noted that they have **few opportunities to analyse issues, develop solutions, and present their ideas to decision makers**. Youth identified a **lack of empowerment and engagement opportunities** as factors that limit youth involvement in decision making.

Young refugees noted that they are often not allowed to voice their opinions or that community elders and leaders rarely listen or pay attention to young people. Youth also indicated that they don’t know where, when, or how to engage with decision makers. Youth identified that they lack opportunities to express their views and participate



in decision-making processes. They identified remote geographic locations, nationality, sex, age, mobility, a lack of confidence, and a lack of family approval as undercurrents that limit youth engagement. Many young refugees expressed concern that **youth with disabilities are not given a chance to speak out** on issues affecting them. Other young refugees noted frustration at **being consulted by UNHCR or other international agencies but with no follow-up action**, which left them with the impression that their views were not taken seriously. Youth in all consultations emphasized that when they are not involved in the decisions that impact them, they feel alienated and are more likely to get involved in substance abuse, theft, violence, early marriage, prostitution, or other negative coping strategies.



“Youth should be *helped* to make their own decisions – the perception is that they cannot make decisions.”

## SEVEN CORE ACTIONS for Refugee Youth

Throughout the **GRYC** process, participants brainstormed solutions to the challenges they face, identified how young refugees could take actions themselves, and made recommendations to stakeholders about the types of support that they need. Even though they are living in different geographical locations and contexts, the suggestions that the participants generated are remarkably similar. They often proposed a package of interconnected actions that could address multiple challenges. Looking across the hundreds of context-specific solutions, actions, and recommendations that participants developed during the consultations, consistent themes emerged. The themes were organized and consolidated by youth into “Seven Core Actions for Refugee Youth”. At the global consultation, participants elaborated on the Core Actions and presented them to stakeholders.

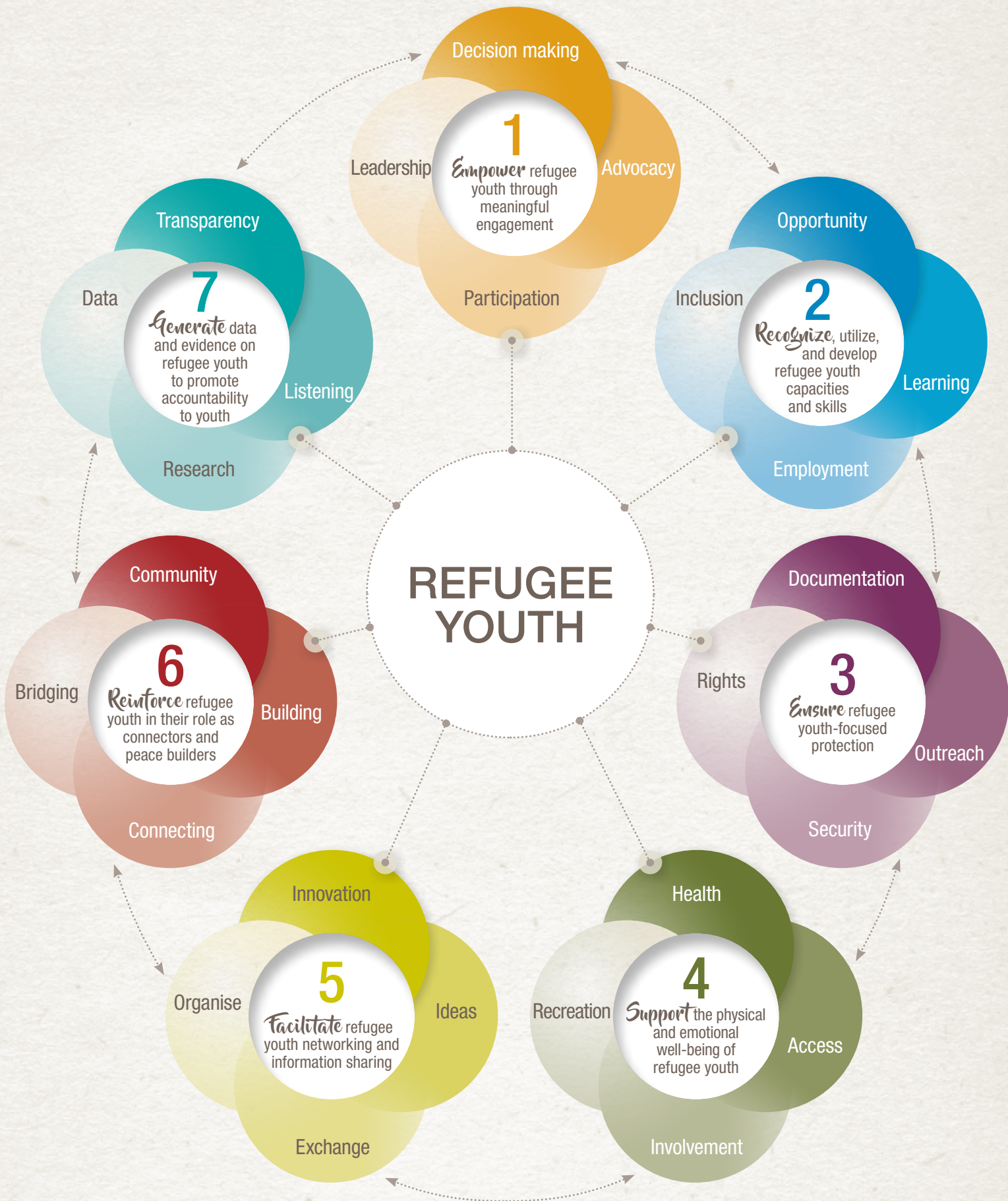


“If every one of us youth takes actions with our own hands, then all the society will *change*.”

The Core Actions are intended as a framework to guide humanitarian actors to shape youth-specific policy, guidance, and programmes. In keeping with the interrelated solutions, actions, and recommendations that youth have suggested, the Core Actions present a holistic and systems approach to addressing the interconnected challenges that young refugees face. These actions are not intended to be prioritized; coherent programming for youth should ensure that the Core Actions are considered in an integrated manner as each of the actions reinforces the others.



# CORE ACTIONS for Refugee Youth



# Core Action 1

## Empower refugee youth through meaningful engagement

**Humanitarian actors** must work to empower young refugees by facilitating opportunities for youth to voice their ideas, engage in decision making processes, and develop their leadership potential.

In **Ecuador**, refugee and host community youth have initiated a campaign “Lo que nos une” (What unites us) focused on combating racism, xenophobia, and discrimination and promoting integration.

The group uses radio and fun public events to reach out to the community and also makes direct proposals to political leaders.

In **New Zealand**, refugee youth run the *New Zealand National Refugee Youth Council*. NZNRYC’s aim is to address issues faced by refugee youth by helping newly arrived refugee youth realize their full potential and successfully integrate into NZ culture. They do this by engaging all refugee youth with key national networks and advocating on refugee youth issues.

Youth who participated in the GRYC national consultation in **Uganda** wrote and shared a report on the consultation findings with Office of the Prime Minister and as a result, the settlement where they live has agreed to involve youth in local decision making.

GRYC participants consistently emphasized that the opportunity for youth to speak on behalf of young refugees in their communities, to share their concerns, and to be listened to and taken seriously by representatives of governments, UNHCR and other UN agencies, and INGOs is transformative. They also commented on their need to further develop their understanding of different stakeholders’ respective roles so that they can be more effective in their advocacy efforts. They talked about how meaningful youth engagement, such as participation in community programmes and decision making processes, political activism, mentorship, and advocacy, could counter the isolation refugee youth experience, foster mutual support among refugees, and empower young refugees by tapping into their knowledge, skills, passion, and leadership abilities.

### Refugee youth engagement and empowerment must include:

- Engaging actively with youth in an ongoing and meaningful basis to seek their ideas and input on issues that are important to them and their communities;
- Supporting youth to analyse, understand, and advocate on issues of importance to them and their communities;
- Helping youth to establish and sustain their own youth organizations and representative bodies, such as youth councils or advisory boards, in order to enable them to express themselves and take action;
- Supporting collaborative approaches that bring together refugee youth with other actors to develop, review, and implement policies and practices on issues of importance to youth; and
- Establishing programmes that support the engagement of adults to share their technical expertise through mentoring.<sup>16</sup>

“Through youth empowerment and engagement, we are able to deliver results to benefit ourselves and other young refugees globally... We can engage by mobilizing action.”

<sup>16</sup> More information on “Lo que nos une” is available at [<https://loquenosune.org/tag/ret-international/>]. More information on New Zealand National Refugee Youth Council is available at [<http://www.nznryc.org.nz>] and [<https://www.facebook.com/nz.refugeeyouth/>].

# Core Action 2

Young refugees in **Australia**, frustrated by their own experiences trying to access education in Indonesia, formed and funded the Cisaura Refugee Learning Centre, which now supports 100 young refugees to study in Jakarta.

In **Uganda**, a young refugee from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) started COBURWAS together with his friends when he was 14 in order to educate refugees. It has grown into COBURWAS, International Youth Organisation to Transform Africa (CIYOTA), a volunteer based non-profit organisation focused on education, leadership, and non-violence that has provided functional education and entrepreneurial leadership to over 5,000 refugee and national youth.

“Many of these Afghan boys have been working for years in Afghanistan... They have many skills and recognizing and using their skills could improve their self-confidence and self-esteem.”

## Recognize, utilize, and develop refugee youth capacities and skills

**Humanitarian actors** must recognize and build upon young refugees’ existing knowledge, skills, capacities, and qualifications; support access to quality and inclusive learning opportunities, including formal and non-formal education, skills building, and jobs training; and facilitate employment and livelihood opportunities.

GRYC participants consistently emphasized formal and informal education and other learning opportunities as a means to empower youth as socially responsible leaders. They highlighted the value of recognizing young refugees’ existing skills, capacities, and qualifications. Participants underlined the importance of access to a range of certified quality learning and skill-building opportunities that develop young refugees’ literacy, numeracy, vocational, entrepreneurial, and life skills. Participants emphasized that youth can take an active role in supporting accessible and inclusive learning opportunities within their communities.

### Recognizing, utilizing, and developing refugee youth skills and capacities includes:

- Enabling recognition of existing education or vocational qualifications;
- Expanding access and quality across the full range of formal and non-formal learning opportunities;
- Ensuring equal legal access to formal education for all young refugees;
- Enhancing financing to enable more youth to access secondary and tertiary education, vocational training, skills building, and other learning opportunities;
- Putting systems in place to identify, support, and develop young refugees’ talents and capacities and build their literacy, numeracy, vocational, and life skills;
- Supporting peer-to-peer transfer of knowledge and skills;
- Providing young refugees with access to formal employment and training through recognition of qualifications, provision of work permits, and through linking them with entrepreneurs and businesses to provide skills training and employment opportunities; and
- Supporting learning opportunities that facilitate protection, integration and peacebuilding.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> More information on the Cisaura Refugee Learning Center is available at [<http://cisauralearning.com/#intro>]. More information on COBURWAS International Organisation to Transform Africa is available at [<http://www.coburwas.org>].

# Core Action 3

In **Zambia**, youth suggested tackling early and forced marriage through peer education.

In **Chad**, youth suggested practical efforts to prevent and respond to SGBV, including running self-defence classes for women, providing support for SGBV survivors, and organising couples counselling to help young couples resolve their issues before they escalate.

In **Pakistan**, youth proposed forming youth committees and using social media, community meetings, and art to convey messages on gender equality, prevention of SGBV, and respect for LGBTI individuals.

“The real way of fighting against SGBV is to work with and empower youth. The solution is to enable refugee youth to educate others and follow up on their gender-based violence cases.”

## Ensure refugee youth-focused protection

**Humanitarian actors** must engage young refugees in protecting themselves and their peers and ensure that young refugees have access to personal documentation, freedom of movement, and protective services that are attuned to their needs and ensure their safety.

GRYC participants stressed the importance of recognizing and addressing protection challenges that are specific or are amplified for youth due to their age and stage of development. This includes preventing and responding to SGBV, addressing LGBTI protection concerns, addressing discrimination and isolation related to having a disability or being an ethnic or religious minority, and facilitating youth to obtain documentation. Participants also emphasized the importance of addressing issues for unaccompanied youth, such as when they turn 18 and “age out”, family separation, and reunification. They suggested ways that youth could support peer protection through outreach, advocacy, and peer education.

### Ensuring protection involving, focused on, or led by refugee youth includes:

- Enabling peer-to-peer SGBV education and outreach to survivors of SGBV to help them seek support and services;
- Acquainting LGBTI refugee youth with their rights and educating others about their rights through raising awareness;
- Acknowledging the specific protection concerns of refugee youth with disabilities and supporting them to access the services that they need;
- Acknowledging and addressing the specific protection concerns of refugee youth from social, ethnic, and religious minorities;
- Involving host-country youth in campaigns aimed at ending racism, xenophobia, and discrimination against refugees;
- Facilitating the complex process of family reunification;
- Ensuring that young people are able to secure personal documentation that enables them to access services, move freely, and have personal security;
- Supporting young refugees as active protection actors, including involving them in the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the promotion of protection for refugee youth; and
- Addressing the needs of unaccompanied youth, including those who have turned 18, by establishing transition programmes.

# Core Action 4

In **Jordan**, youth decided to raise awareness about the importance of psychosocial support by spreading the message among youth that it is natural to feel traumatized by the effect of war, providing peer-to-peer support through home visits, and engaging those who have been affected by war in youth activities.

In **Uganda**, youth suggest supporting local and refugee youth to raise awareness and educate people on how to develop youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services.

“To play football or basketball with everyone is nice...to be part of a team is better, you don't feel alone.”

## Support the physical and emotional well-being of refugee youth

**Humanitarian actors** must support young refugees to access opportunities, services and activities that support their mental, emotional, and physical health and happiness and enhance their ability to engage and develop socially, physically, spiritually, and emotionally with their peers, family, and community.

GRYC participants stressed the importance of general physical health but also emotional, psychological, and spiritual well-being. They talked about how stress and social isolation linked to past experiences, uncertainty, being unaccompanied, difficult living arrangements, xenophobia, racism, and limited opportunities to make friends can lead to negative coping strategies. They stressed the importance of accessible, youth-friendly, sexual and reproductive health care, and psychosocial services including youth outreach, networks and peer support. They also emphasized the importance of sports and recreation as a physical and emotional outlet to socialize, build confidence, and focus on something positive.

### Supporting refugee youth physical and emotional wellbeing includes:

- Supporting and encouraging refugee youth to engage in peer-to-peer psychosocial first aid services in their communities;
- Ensuring access to youth-specific and appropriate quality services for mental health and psychosocial support to address the emotional difficulties associated with forced displacement, discrimination, and isolation;
- Involving local and refugee youth in raising awareness about sexual and reproductive health and ensuring care is age- and gender- accessible and appropriate;
- Creating dedicated safe, welcoming, and enabling spaces for youth to make friends and find peer support;
- Enabling refugee youth to participate in sports and other physical or recreational activities to promote inclusion and help them make friends and build peer networks;
- Engaging youth to develop awareness about stress in displacement situations and actively support the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of their peers and communities; and
- Working to develop community understanding of the challenges that young people face both physically and psychologically at their specific times of life.

# Core Action 5

## Facilitate refugee youth networking and information sharing

**Humanitarian actors** must facilitate two-way sharing of accurate, honest, age-appropriate, and context-specific information with and among young refugees through channels and structures that are easily accessible.

In **Malta**, young refugees who met through the GRYC national consultations formed Spark15 to represent and support refugee youth in Malta. Currently they are working to develop a resource library in order to provide refugee youth with accurate information about their rights and how to access services. They hope to obtain legal recognition so that they can effectively act as a link between the government and young refugees.

In **Sweden**, young unaccompanied refugees formed an organization, Ensamkommandes Forbund (Association of Unaccompanied), so that those who have been there for longer can reach out to new arrivals and help them connect to the information they need.

In **Germany**, young refugees suggest bringing refugee and national youth together to create a multi-lingual refugee newspaper.

GRYC participants highlighted the importance of ensuring that young refugees have access to accurate and age-appropriate information about legal issues, asylum procedures, refugee rights, and protection risks so that they can make decisions about their lives. Young refugees also emphasized the value of a two-way dialogue with humanitarian actors. Young refugees stressed that they are keen to use social media to reach out to young refugees and other youth, transmit information, build and sustain relationships, offer mutual support, multiply refugee youth voices, and advocate for refugee rights. They cited the information sharing and networking that took place during the GRYC and noted how empowering it was to voice the concerns of other young refugees.

### Networking and information sharing includes:

- Engaging with youth as substantive actors in collecting and disseminating information related to refugee protection, durable solutions, the protection environment, and services relevant for youth and their communities;
- Actively seeking youth input and ideas on how to reach out to young people and other community members on important issues;
- Exploring with youth innovative ways of using technology including social media to disseminate and exchange information;
- Supporting refugee youth to expand their networks with other youth and youth-led organizations nationally, regionally, and globally as well as with business and social entrepreneurs, and organizations; and
- Encouraging national, regional, and global youth organizations, networks, and forums to engage with and include refugee youth in their organizations and activities to ensure that refugee youth are represented and their voices are heard.

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

# Core Action 6

In **Turkey**, refugee youth are acting as medical translators to help older refugees access healthcare.

In order to foster mutual understanding and dialogue, youth in **Chad** suggested organising activities with refugee youth and national youth to coincide with meetings between traditional leaders from refugee and host communities.

In **Greece**, young refugees suggested creating common clubs with Greek young people in order to learn from each other.

In **Germany**, youth plan to establish a peer support “homework club” involving older youth supporting younger children with their school work.

In **Cyprus**, refugee youth suggested that they organise structured dialogues with local youth to identify common issues.

“ Youth are connectors! Youth take care of children, youth translate for older people, and [youth] have links with the host community. ”

## Reinforce refugee youth in their role as connectors and peace builders

**Humanitarian actors** must channel and reinforce young refugees’ abilities to build connections and relationships across social, cultural, linguistic, political, and other differences and support them to contribute meaningfully to peacebuilding processes.

GRYC participants repeatedly stressed the different ways young people can reach across the invisible boundaries of culture, ethnicity, religion, geography, language, sexual orientation, gender, ability, and age that separate people for much of their lives. This is a special capacity that youth often demonstrate, and which serves and supports them to help each other and to support their families and communities. GRYC participants talked about how the consultations have served as an important opportunity for refugee and host-country youth to meet and gain a better understanding of the issues they face, as youth, and for refugee youth to work more closely with national youth organizations. It is important to support young refugees to use their abilities as “connectors” and peace builders.

### Reinforcing young refugees as “connectors” includes:

- Bridging inter-generational gaps through the promotion and development of relationships with children, adults, and older persons within their families and communities;
- Building inter-community and inter-cultural relationships through the use of social, artistic, and cultural skills that enable youth to reach across boundaries between refugees and other communities;
- Using youth as connectors between different ethnic, religious, and national communities to promote peacebuilding and peaceful coexistence;
- Addressing negative norms related to gender and sexual identity by challenging social and cultural mores;
- Building relationships, friendships, and understanding between able-bodied persons and persons with disabilities; and
- Utilizing technology, social media, and other innovative approaches to build far-reaching networks that include people of all ages, ethnicities, nationalities, and cultures.



# Core Action 7

## Generate data and evidence on refugee youth to promote accountability to youth

In **Uganda**, refugee youth are involved in encouraging young refugees to register as refugees, providing youth-to-youth support on obtaining documentation, and in conducting needs assessments.

In **Ecuador**, refugee youth suggest that youth advocate to address the lack of government recognition for refugee identification documents, and use the media to sensitise the host population with regard to refugee identity documents.

**Humanitarian actors** must gather quality disaggregated data on youth as well as on their needs, priorities, skills, and contributions; this is essential for planning and designing youth programming and being accountable to youth.

GRYC participants emphasized the importance of collecting and sharing accurate demographic data about youth in order to make youth and their needs more visible, enable better budgeting and planning for inclusive youth-focused programmes, and foster accountability. They also emphasized that young refugees themselves can play a key role in gathering data and evidence on youth in refugee contexts when given the support, training, and opportunity.

### Generating data on refugee youth and promoting accountability includes:

- Collecting accurate disaggregated sex and age data on refugee youth as a specific demographic category with distinct needs;
- Supporting refugee youth-led research, and youth-led evaluations of programmes aimed at and including youth;
- Supporting ongoing research and the pursuit of evidence relevant to developing effective youth-appropriate programmes and services for refugees;
- Assessing specific youth needs by consulting and mobilizing refugee youth wherever they are;
- Organizing comprehensive campaigns to reach out to unregistered refugee youth;
- Creating common open spaces for youth and humanitarian actors to meet and listening to their voices to make youth programming relevant;
- Planning and budgeting in consultation with youth to ensure transparency; and
- Encouraging donors to require disaggregated data on youth from humanitarian actors.

“ How can we work with youth if we do not see them?

How can we plan for youth if we do not know their needs?

How much should we invest, if we're not sure how many they are?

How can we host youth in our countries without providing specific humanitarian assistance focused on youth?

How can we write effective public policy for youth without consulting with the youth it is intended to benefit?

How can we work and progress together if we are invisible? ”

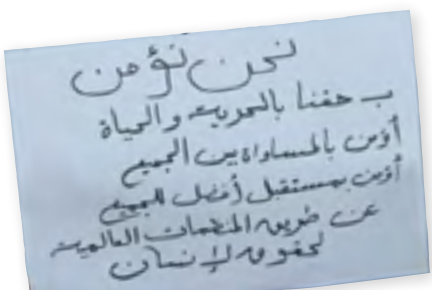
## 4. IMPLEMENTING THE **CORE ACTIONS**: Recommendations for all actors involved in humanitarian response

The **GRYC** have set a precedent and have shown refugee youth that all actors involved in humanitarian response care about them. The GRYC process has demonstrated that Governments and humanitarian organizations are willing to conduct business in a way that taps into the capacities and potential of young people. The GRYC have also shown the value of a two-way process that supports young people to learn while at the same time learning from them.



The **GRYC** also helped to illustrate that youth see things differently and see things that children and older adults do not see. It is critical to understand things from the youth perspective. This means fostering an open honest exchange between young people and older adults, sharing information in both directions, and developing relationships. Youth can identify other youth who are struggling, and they can reach those who are hard for other actors to reach. Young people can often tell when their friends and peers are at risk of negative coping strategies or becoming radicalized. Simply put, young people have access to information and networks that older humanitarian actors do not have. When it comes to information on youth, youth are the experts.

The GRYC hope to spark an attitudinal shift that recognizes forcibly displaced young people for their potential and capacity, rather than their vulnerability. It is hoped that this spark can ignite an ongoing commitment to consulting with and meaningfully engaging young refugees in decision making and programme planning relevant to them and their communities. The type of engagement demonstrated by the GRYC should become institutionalized through the development of frameworks and guidance on consultation and collaboration with youth. As noted above, the Core Actions are intended as a framework to help humanitarian actors in working with and for refugee youth, and to shape youth-specific policy, guidance, and programmes. The following section outlines specific, practical, and operational recommendations for how Governments, humanitarian and other actors can take steps to implement the Core Actions.



## Recommendations for UNHCR

- Provide more leadership opportunities for refugee youth through camp or community management structures, employment or volunteering opportunities, representation on decision making bodies, and as spokespersons, youth ambassadors, or advocates at local, national, regional, or global events.
- Proactively and responsively work with youth to identify ways for youth to be involved in humanitarian protection and assistance programmes, including youth-led initiatives.
- Strengthen the participation of youth in the implementation of solutions, including through their inclusion in planning and programming, in development and peacebuilding, and otherwise as contributors to solutions.
- Ensure through policy and guidance, that staff engage the hardest-to-reach young people, including unaccompanied children and youth, adolescent girls/young women, married girls, LGBTI youth, SGBV survivors, and young people with disabilities, and specifically consider them in programmatic responses.
- Support the representation of young women and men in community management and decision making.
- Work with States to include refugee, internally displaced, and stateless youth in national youth strategies and action plans.
- Link with national youth organizations and engage host-country youth in developing strategies for refugee youth at the national level to avoid developing parallel services and systems.
- Link with other global youth forums and networks to ensure that refugee youth are included on global agendas and that refugee youth voices are heard.
- Develop operational guidance to support UNHCR staff and partners to work with and for refugee youth to implement the Core Actions, including standardized policies and guidelines for youth who are “ageing out”.
- Establish a global refugee youth council to advise UNHCR on youth issues and represent young refugees globally.
- Establish a training programme for staff working with refugee youth at the field level and involve refugee youth.
- Fund refugee youth-led initiatives and expand the Youth Initiative Fund and/or other similar funding to support youth-led initiatives consistent with the Core Actions.
- Expand employment and income generating activities that foster self-reliance of refugee, internally displaced, and stateless youth and their families.
- Expand financial assistance to support youth to access tertiary education, including formal and informal learning opportunities, vocational training, and other skill-building opportunities.
- Adjust how data is collected and managed in order to identify and report on protection issues, targeted programming, and individual assistance for youth 15-24 years of age at country and the global level.



## Recommendations for **HOST GOVERNMENTS**

- Include refugee, stateless, and other displaced youth in national youth strategies, and national sports and cultural initiatives.
- Support initiatives to facilitate learning the national language/s for refugee youth.
- Facilitate the acquisition of personal identification documents, including machine readable Convention Travel Documents.
- Ensure that all security, immigration, and asylum services are well-trained in refugee rights and appropriate, youth-friendly procedures.
- Facilitate recognition of refugees’ educational certifications from their country of origin and other countries they have lived in.
- Expand initiatives to make public education and other learning opportunities accessible to refugee youth.
- Expand access to legal employment for refugee youth.
- Facilitate opportunities and programmes for refugee and host-country youth to share experiences and cultural orientation information with newcomers prior to their arrival, and on an ongoing basis once they arrive.



## Recommendations for **DONORS**

- Support implementation of the Core Actions by creating funding streams and calls for proposals focused on implementation of the Core Actions, including dedicated funding for youth-led initiatives.
- Fund collaborative efforts to develop guidance and policies to further elaborate the Core Actions.
- Encourage UNHCR, NGOs, and other implementing agencies to support and develop programming for the hardest-to-reach youth as outlined in the Core Actions.
- Support the development of evidenced-based and evidence-informed programming for youth through multi-year funding cycles and other means.
- Require projects to collect age- and sex-disaggregated data as a condition of their funding.
- Support the professionalization of the humanitarian youth sector through funding deployments and dedicated staff where needed.

## Recommendations for **NON-GOVERNMENTAL** organizations

- Incorporate the Core Actions and the learning identified through this consultation process into programming guidance and practice to guide agency staff who work with and for refugee youth to implement the Core Actions.
- Provide more leadership and employment opportunities for refugee youth within NGOs.
- Involve youth when conducting assessments to understand their perspectives, identify youth needs and capacities, and gather their ideas for projects.
- Identify and support young women and men who are “ageing-out”.
- Ensure that staff engage the hardest-to-reach young people, including unaccompanied children and youth, adolescent girls/young women, married girls, LGBTI youth, SGBV survivors, ethnic or religious minorities, and young people with disabilities, and specifically consider them in programmatic responses.
- Allocate dedicated (trained) staff—including youth—and resources to youth programming and develop youth programming approaches that involve youth in assessment, design, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation.
- Collect population data disaggregated by age in order to identify the number of youth within a given population or target area, and develop youth-specific indicators to enable monitoring and reporting on how programming impacts youth.
- Engage youth as research partners and conduct research with rather than on young people and consider intersections, such as how age intersects with gender, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, and other factors.

## Recommendations for **YOUTH**

- Engage with local and national organizations and host-government authorities to raise awareness and support for the Core Actions.
- Incorporate the Core Actions and the learning identified through this consultation process into youth organizations’ programming guidance and practice.
- Engage with national, regional, and global youth organizations and networks to ensure that refugee voices are represented and heard.
- Organize or contribute to education and learning opportunities for children and youth by transferring skills, knowledge, and awareness to others and advocate for improved access for refugee youth to national secondary, tertiary and vocational education and skills training opportunities.
- Contribute to and facilitate activities and initiatives that build inter-community and inter-cultural relationships, address negative norms related to gender and sexual identity, and link persons with disabilities with able-bodied persons.
- Fight gender discrimination, SGBV, and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity by educating peers and community members on women’s rights and LGBTI rights and lobbying to improve support for SGBV survivors.
- Advocate and provide peer support to strengthen protection for refugee youth, related to personal documentation, asylum procedures, refugee rights, and context-specific protection information.
- Advocate for youth-friendly and gender-sensitive mental and reproductive health services and recreational opportunities.
- Actively support the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of peers through mentoring, peer-support, outreach, and leadership initiatives.
- Support collection of accurate disaggregated data on youth (aged 15-24) by leading or contributing to youth-focused data collection initiatives.

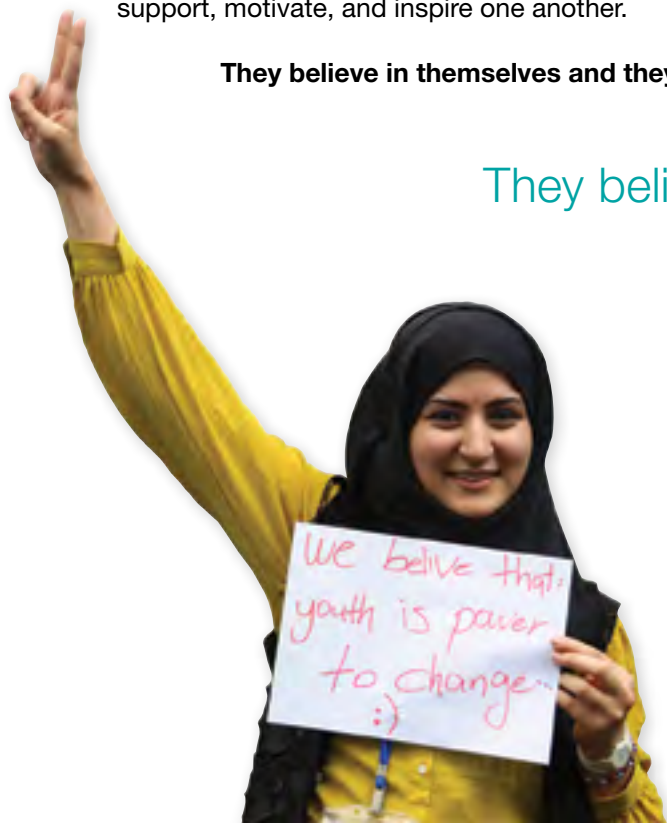
## 5. IMPACT of the GRYC

The GRYC have demonstrated the creative power, energy, and leadership capacities that young people have.

Youth, both refugees and host-country nationals, showed that despite differences and preconceptions, they are all youth. They face similar challenges and they can work together to exchange ideas and solve problems. GRYC participants commented that the process itself contributed to breaking down the boundaries between cultures, religions, and gender and promoted greater understanding and insight. During the consultations many participants formed strong friendships. The GRYC also helped to build participants' confidence and promote their leadership. The consultations empowered youth and inspired them to be more active in their communities. The GRYC have shown a different way to work with and for young people: to give them a voice and to support them to be heard and be taken seriously. Many of the young people who met through the consultations remain in touch on a near-daily basis through social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp. They continue to share ideas and experiences. They support, motivate, and inspire one another.

**They believe in themselves and they believe in each other.**

They believe in youth.



“

“I hadn't expected that I could engage and integrate with refugee youth on the personal level. But I formed new long-lasting **friendships** and relationships and maybe I will visit them in their country one day!”

“After **participating** in consultation, I've got the skills for mobilizing people in my refugee settlement to participate in our next project of resolving the conflicts in our community.”

“It's very gratifying to have the opportunity to express not only our problems but also the **solutions**.”

“I am now the **voice** of the voiceless. I will be advocating for those who can't...”

“It was amazing for me to learn about **advocacy** skills.”

“I thought national youth discriminate us but during this **consultation** I have come to understand that we're one.”

”





**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency



**GRYC**



Lyrics of the song "We Believe in Youth"  
written by Elvis Elwabanga Dubois