



UNHCR Global Youth Advisory Council

Recommendations to the Programme of Action for the Global Compact on Refugees

Introduction

UNHCR has formed a Global Youth Advisory Council (GYAC) that will serve as a consultative group on issues relating to the protection and development of young people who are refugees, internally displaced and/or stateless, and their communities. Global policy makers are currently contributing to the development of a Programme of Action for the Global Compact on Refugees. The GYAC has been engaged in this process and this paper presents their recommendations to improve humanitarian work with and for refugees, the communities and States that host them.

1.0 Rapid and well-supported reception & admission

To ensure a rapid and well-supported reception and admission process, governments and national and international actors, including UNHCR, should involve a wide range of local actors, including refugees and host communities, in ongoing monitoring of the protection situation, assessment of needs, and design and provision of services and solutions in camp, settlement, and urban settings. This includes the following actions:

- Sensitize, from the earliest point, host communities on forced displacement issues and ensure that both refugees and host communities have access to adequate and age-appropriate information on refugees' rights, obligations and key services under international law and national legislation. Refugees should take an active role in this effort.
- Recognize and support refugee initiatives and engage them together with host communities in assessment and response monitoring. Refugees understand the cultural issues and practical challenges and are thus best-placed to identify and address the needs of refugees.
- Ensure that reception services are efficient, effective, and accountable; do not burden refugees to repeatedly re-tell their stories; employ qualified, empathetic, and well-trained staff who understand refugee-specific issues and needs; and enable refugees to easily access their personal information.
- Ensure that refugee status determination is a transparent process, executed in a timely and dignified manner with an automatic right to appeal and free legal assistance. When claims are rejected, both the country of asylum and the country of origin must refrain from the use of detention and should support these persons to be readmitted and reintegrated in a dignified manner.

In **Ecuador**, local radio stations broadcast discussions on refugees and the contributions they make to the host community.

In **Zimbabwe**, teams of refugees with expertise in child protection, SGBV and disabilities work at the community level amongst newly arrived refugees to prevent and respond to SGBV, promote protective childcare practices, and address the needs of persons with disabilities.

- Identify, recognize, and address the specific needs of refugees such as children, especially those who are separated or unaccompanied, persons with disabilities, women at risk, survivors of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) or other types of violence, the elderly and others who need special assistance. For those identified, specialized staff and assessment tools should be utilised to clarify the specific nature of their needs to enable rapid access to appropriate services.
- Provide widely recognised personal identification documents that ensure equal access to services across public and private sectors; protect from arbitrary arrest and detention; and enable freedom of movement throughout the country of asylum. International travel including valid exit and re-entry to countries of asylum should be able fundamental and facilitated by easily obtainable machine readable international travel documents that are valid for a minimum of five years.
- Accelerate administrative processes so that asylum seekers and refugees can immediately access health, education and protection services and the labour market regardless of their status.

2.0 Support for immediate and ongoing needs

In all aspects of support for immediate and ongoing needs, hosting States, UNHCR and international and national humanitarian partners should develop a whole-of-society approach that encourages and supports refugees, including youth, to have more voice and agency in service provision. To enable refugees to lead a safe and dignified life in their country of asylum, State actors and their humanitarian and development partners should:

- Facilitate refugees' integration into national labour markets and local economies in a way that benefits both refugees and the host community. This involves:
 - Granting refugees the right to work;
 - Formally and informally recognising refugees' existing skills, capacities and qualifications;
 - Supporting refugees to develop locally-relevant employment skills;
 - Using incentive schemes to support private sector employers that employ refugees;
 - Supporting and investing in refugees' entrepreneurship; and
 - Enabling refugees ease of access to financial and banking services, including credit to support entrepreneurial activities.
- Provide employment opportunities with governmental and nongovernmental humanitarian and development agencies at the local, national, and international levels, enabling refugees to use their skills, expertise, and practical experience in

In **Germany**, private firms offer refugees training in job skills.

In **Austria**, the Deloitte Future Fund, a private sector initiative, funds projects and companies that are led by refugees or that hire refugees.

In **Ecuador**, regional ministries of education implement *We Breathe Inclusion*, a learning module that supports students, teachers and parents to identify and address discrimination within their school community to make their school more inclusive for all.

In **Uganda**, *Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID)* runs "Bridge to Formal Schooling" an accelerated education programme that supports refugee children learn the language of instruction and integrate into the Ugandan education system.

In **Austria**, *Refugee Code* trains refugees on how to develop mobile apps and learn coding.

In **Uganda**, a young refugee woman founded the *Girls Out of School Association*, which engages single mothers, survivors of SGBV, and women who married as children; teaches them culinary and business skills so they can run a small business and become self-reliant; and advocates for the eradication of child marriage.

In **Germany**, the organization *Women Empowerment*, founded and led by a young woman refugee, supports women to address SGBV, provides psychosocial support, engages them in activities and empowers them to find their passions and their strengths.

providing services related to planning, housing, education, health and information on legal issues.

- Work with refugees to address barriers to education and learning opportunities at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. This includes:
 - Ensuring regional and international recognition of educational qualifications;
 - Expanding legal and practical access to national education systems and to grants and scholarship schemes for both formal and non-formal education opportunities;
 - Reducing administrative barriers for refugees in accessing education;
 - Ensuring education fees for refugees are equal to those of nationals and that scholarships and funding for other related costs are available;
 - Addressing discrimination at the school level and actively fostering integration and inclusion;
 - Supporting refugee-led education initiatives to create bridges to formal school systems.
- Provide flexible formal and non-formal learning opportunities for refugees, including accelerated learning, local language, literacy, numeracy, vocational skills, life skills, and computer skills (including online training such as coding, networking and cyber security).
- Address the specific needs of children, including those who are unaccompanied, by strengthening existing family and community support networks that help to protect children and ensuring that persons working with refugee children are qualified and sensitive to age, gender, developmental stages, psychosocial needs, culture and common child protection risks in humanitarian situations.
- Ensure all refugee services and support are available and appropriate for young people, with tailored services to meet the specific needs and challenges of refugee youth, including targeted services to groups with particular needs, such as young women, those identifying as LGBTIQ, and unaccompanied or separated children).
- Support and finance women-led initiatives and projects that address SGBV, including female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage and early pregnancy, and empower women financially and emotionally to become economically stable and independent, so that they can meet their own needs and those of their families.
- Ensure psychosocial support for refugees to promote well-being and involve refugees in delivery of these services. Provide specialized mental health services for persons who have more serious psychosocial distress or mental health challenges.
- Facilitate sports, cultural and recreational activities for refugee children and youth together with the host community to promote well-being, understanding, tolerance and integration. Invest in and recognize the talent of refugee youth and give them opportunities to participate and compete in international events.

In **Uganda**, *Africa Youth Action Network (AYAN)*, a refugee youth-led organization, works at the community level to help young people shift from a culture of conflict to a culture of peace.

In **Pakistan**, refugee women have developed their capacity so they can promote peace as outreach workers in their communities.

In **Turkey**, peace mentoring networks bring refugees and host community youth together.

In **Uganda**, a communal land initiative provides land plots to local communities to be shared and farmed by refugees and local communities, which promotes social and economic integration.

In **Germany**, *International Psychosocial Organization (IPSO)* trains immigrants and refugees from different countries to become to support other migrants and refugees by providing counseling in their mother tongue.

In **Austria** and **Germany**, *START* provides financial and practical support to refugee and migrant students to finish secondary school.

In **Turkey**, refugee communities formed an online trading platform to buy and sell products, facilitating interaction between the refugee and host communities.

3.0 Assistance for refugee-receiving communities and institutions

Assistance for local and national institutions and the communities receiving refugees should include:

- Platforms and opportunities to foster peace-building processes. This includes teaching peace education within national education systems to assist refugees and the host community to understand the root causes of conflict and to encourage communication, relationship-building and peaceful coexistence. Recognize and facilitate refugee peace-building efforts and actively engage youth.
- Engagement of regional institutions such as development banks and regional intergovernmental bodies. They can contribute to the Programme of Action for the Global Compact on Refugees through supporting hosting states within regions to validate and recognize documentation on a mutual basis, to ease recognition of refugee's education and professional credentials, banking documentation, and regional travel documents. Regional athletic federations could provide technical support and funding to support refugee athletes to train and develop.

4.0 Expanded opportunities for solutions

In order to support voluntary and sustainable return of refugees to their country of origin that is transparent, safe, dignified, and accountable, it is essential to:

- Invest in peace building, reconciliation and planning for local and national development that engages returnees, including women and youth in particular, to access their rights and reintegrate successfully.
- Ensure that the choice of return is truly voluntary and that women, men, and all young people are involved in decision-making about return, based on accurate information about the situation in their country of origin.
- Avoid conditions or restrictions in the host country, such as the inability to exercise the right to work or family reunification, that pressure refugees to return to untenable or unsafe situations in their countries of origin.
- Build the capacity of young people to play an active role in monitoring, analysing and reporting to refugee communities in countries of asylum on the experiences of those who have voluntarily returned.
- Ensure that children and youth can learn their mother tongue while in their host country so that they are able to return and reintegrate successfully, but also to enable them to learn the language of the host country.

It is necessary to strengthen resettlement programmes and procedures by actively engaging refugees. The lived experiences of resettled refugees should be utilised to understand what works and identify good practices. Therefore, it is important to:

- Partner with and learn from refugee networks and organisations in resettlement countries and share this learning with national and international actors to improve resettlement practice.

In **Australia**, young refugees worked directly with service providers to improve education and resettlement services.

In **Canada**, the government encourages Canadian citizens to form local private sponsorship groups that provide financial, logistical, and emotional support to help refugees adapt to their new life in Canada.

Globally, *Talent Without Boundaries* is developing a data base of refugees' skills to match against the needs of private sector employers.

In **Austria**, *Connecting People* connects local mentors with young refugees to support and guide their education and professional development.

- Provide opportunities for resettled refugees to work as resettlement officers in receiving countries.
- Promote the positive engagement of traditional resettlement states with new and emerging resettlement countries.
- Highlight and share the positive contributions that refugees make to their resettlement countries to encourage the expansion of resettlement programmes.
- Engage in complementary pathways to resettlement, including:
 - Simplifying the financial and administrative procedures for host communities, the private sector and faith-based organisations to sponsor to refugees. This will increase opportunities to alternative and complimentary pathways to admission;
 - Supporting private sector labour mobility schemes that link employers in resettlement countries with skilled refugees whom they could sponsor by providing them employment opportunities;
 - Exploring using sports as an alternative pathway to resettlement;
 - Streamlining and simplifying family reunification processes and procedures to enable families to be more easily and quickly reunited.

To support local integration, in a way that works for both refugees and the communities in which they live, states and civil society should:

- Promote interaction, mutual understanding, tolerance and acceptance between refugee and host communities - integration can only be achieved through this 'two-way' process.
- Invest in employment and livelihoods opportunities that promote inclusion and peaceful coexistence.
- Establish community working groups or committees jointly led by refugees and members of the host community that facilitate refugees' integration.
- Enable refugees to learn local languages to address isolation so that refugees and host communities can communicate and build relationships.
- Involve both refugee and host communities in the development and agreement of local and national development plans.
- Promote intercultural understanding and integration by recognizing that integration is a two-way process and facilitating opportunities for refugees and the host community to interact. Enabling legislation is a prerequisite for interactions in some areas including:
 - Employment – allowing refugees to work legally so that they can support their families, contribute economically to the host community, and build relationships with co-workers;
 - Education – ensuring refugees can access education, so that children can study together and build social connections;
 - Local planning – so that refugees and host community live side by side in local neighbourhoods and are not isolated in camps, restrictive settlements, or segregated housing arrangements.

5.0 Conclusions

The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and the Global Compact on Refugees provide an historic opportunity to dramatically improve the way that, State actors, International Organisations, International Non-Governmental Organisations and local and community-based humanitarian governmental and civil society actors – including refugees – work together to address the needs of refugees and the communities that host them. There is huge potential to better use the capacities of refugees, in particular young people, in humanitarian response.

The Global Youth Advisory Council stands ready to discuss these recommendations and facilitate their implementation.