

### Why Global Youth Consultations?

Young people are increasingly taking on roles as change-makers, ensuring that their voices are heard in critical national, regional and global debates. Facilitated by the easy access to information that globalisation and technology have provided, we are witnessing a global rise in youth activism. Social movements around the world, are led by young people.<sup>1</sup> The same young people are also taking an interest in global agendas such as the post 2015 development goals. Refugee youth are no different. Despite their uncertain future they are equally impacted by the new information age, attracted by opportunities for mobility and a desire for the *normal* lives they see for other youth. Consequently many young refugees become frustrated with their situations and consider secondary movement on to Europe, Australasia or North America. For other young refugees, who for their own reasons do not, or cannot follow their peers, the discrimination, marginalization and hardship of forced displacement increases susceptibility to exploitation and radicalization. Whilst young men are particularly vulnerable, adolescent girls and young women who are already marginalised, isolated and at a greater risk of sexual violence are increasingly affected.

In reality the capacities and needs of refugee youth<sup>2</sup> are often overlooked. Few humanitarian organizations have programmes specifically targeted at these young people, who are falling between-the-gaps in programming aimed at children and adults. Humanitarian actors frequently fail to consult adequately with young refugees and rarely engage with them as active members and leaders of their communities. Exacerbating this is the absence of holistic guidance and policies on good impactful programming for youth in humanitarian contexts. While there are some materials and guidance for adolescent sexual and reproductive health and education there are gaps in many other areas including livelihoods, DRR<sup>3</sup>, peace building, and conflict resolution.

Young refugees' access to youth networks at all levels is limited, and by extension too little is genuinely known about the issues that affect them. There is a need to reach-out to refugee youth and engage them in a meaningful dialogue, to understand their hopes, visions and ideas for the future, to work in partnership with them and provide space and opportunities for them to become leaders. To facilitate this, UNHCR and the Women's Refugee Commission along with international NGO partners from the Youth and Adolescents in Emergencies (YAE) advocacy group and national organizations are planning to undertake a first of its kind global consultation with refugee adolescents and youth.

### What do we want to achieve?

The consultations will provide an opportunity for refugee youth to engage in constructive discussion on issues that affect them. Through an in-person and digital dialogue with refugee young people at the national and global levels the following three objectives will be achieved:

1. **To promote dialogue and provide an environment for refugee youth to build alliances and networks at a national and global level**

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<sup>1</sup> See for example <http://www.heathwoodpress.com/why-recent-global-uprisings-are-led-by-youth-gayle-kimball/>

<sup>2</sup> The UN defines youth as young men and women aged 15 – 24 years, while recognizing that “the meaning of the term youth varies in different societies around the world”. Adopted by the General Assembly (196) World Programme of Action for youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond <http://goo.gl/Y9y2N>

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF and RET produced a DRR guide for governments on *Actions for Children and Youth Resilience* in May 2013. See [http://www.unicef.org/lac/Guia\\_gobiernos\\_acciones\\_resiliencia\\_ninez\\_juventud\\_EN.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/lac/Guia_gobiernos_acciones_resiliencia_ninez_juventud_EN.pdf)

2. **To provide opportunities for refugee youth (girls and boys, young men and women) to emerge as leaders**
3. **To strengthen understanding of the needs and desires of refugee youth and in the process contribute to the development of better programmes for their benefit**

It is also envisaged that through participation refugee youth will develop networks with each other, host community and other youth with some of them emerging as leaders. Discussions will contribute to the identification of a number of ***Core Actions for Refugee Youth*** and provide guidance and inspiration for developing programmes and approaches for working with refugee adolescents and youth.

#### **How do we achieve this?**

The Global Refugee Youth Consultations will be launched at the 2015 UNHCR – NGO Consultations. A total of 12 national workshops will be held, 1 in each of 3 countries in four regions globally - Africa, Asia-Pacific, the Americas and the Middle East and North Africa. This will take place between July 2015 and June 2016. These face-to-face consultations will be complemented by a global virtual dialogue where young refugees have the opportunity to interact and share their thoughts and ideas on specified topics and topics of their choice. Refugee, and host community youth, as well as representatives from national youth organisations and, where possible, national governments will participate in the national workshops. The on-line consultation will be carried out through UNHCR Exchange, a versatile digital platform which encourages social learning and idea sharing between and with refugees.

The second phase will involve selected participants from the national workshops travelling to Geneva to attend and participate in the ***2016 UNHCR NGO Consultations***, the overarching theme of which will be Youth and Adolescents. The young participants will contribute to the NGO consultations by participating in panels and highlighting youth issues in different sessions. They will also lead a one day workshop that will present the findings from the national consultations to other stakeholders, including UN organisations, international and other NGOs, and government representatives. This phase will see the synthesised findings of the national workshops and the ***Core Actions for Refugee Youth*** discussed.

#### **Who will facilitate the consultations?**

The overall process will be led by UNHCR and the Women’s Refugee Commission (WRC).<sup>4</sup> A full time coordinator will manage the entire process assisted by a youth facilitator and an administrator. National workshops will be led by refugee or youth focused organisations from the country concerned, supported by the coordinator and UNHCR country offices. A Steering Committee made up of a few members of the ***YAE*** advocacy group<sup>5</sup> and national NGOs will provide additional support where required.

#### **What will be the outcomes?**

The Global Refugee Youth Consultations ultimately seek to place refugee adolescents and youth higher on the humanitarian agenda and begin an attitudinal shift that identifies young people as human capital, recognised for their potential and capacities, rather than for their vulnerabilities or as a challenge, leading to better humanitarian adolescent and youth policies and programming. More immediately, the participants will present a document outlining the findings and the ***Core Actions for Refugee Youth***, to UNHCR’s Executive Committee in October 2016. A film of the process and refugee young people’s thoughts and ideas will also be produced and UNHCR Exchange platform will be adapted for continued information sharing and to keep the conversation and actions going.

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<sup>4</sup> UNHCR and WRC also collaborated on the organization of the Dialogues with Refugee Women in 2001. see [http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/txis/vtx/home/pendocPDFViewer.html?docid=3bb44d908&query=refugee women](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/txis/vtx/home/pendocPDFViewer.html?docid=3bb44d908&query=refugee%20women).

<sup>5</sup> The ***Youth and Adolescents in Emergencies Advocacy Group***, whose members include the International Rescue Committee; Norwegian Refugee Council, Plan, Refugee Education Trust, Right To Play, Save the Children, Settlement Services International and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.