



“Findings from the GYAC Community Consultations: Feedback on The Global Compact for Refugees”

Following three years of work consulting and engaging young refugees, the High Commissioner for refugees formed the Global Youth Advisory Council (GYAC) in December 2017. This Global Youth Advisory Council is comprised of a diverse group of 15 young refugees. The GYAC is a consultative group on issues relating to the protection and development of the young people that UNHCR works with and for globally, including those who are refugees, internally displaced and stateless. The GYAC represents the voices of young people to ensure that they are heard, considered and incorporated into the work of UNHCR at national, regional and global levels. The council advises UNHCR on principled, practical and actionable solutions to youth-specific protection challenges.

Leading up to the drafting of the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR), the GYAC was involved in the Thematic Consultations II & III in October and IV & V November, and also participated in the High Commissioner’s Dialogue in December 2017. GYAC members drafted and submitted a “Recommendations Paper” and produced a video sharing their recommendations to inform drafting of the GCR. The GYAC has continued its engagement in the GCR drafting process by conducting community consultations in 10 countries with over 250 young refugees to gather feedback on the Global Compact on Refugees from community actors. In May 2018, GYAC members travelled to Geneva to participate in the Fourth Consultation on the GCR and share the feedback on the GCR that they gathered through their community consultations, with the aim of influencing the final drafts of the GCR. ***This paper presents the GYAC recommendations for changes to the text of the Global Compact for Refugees-Draft 2 that are relevant for Drafts 3 & 4 and any subsequent drafts.***

A. Mechanisms for burden-and responsibility-sharing

3. Key tools for effecting burden-and responsibility-sharing

Section 3.2 A multi-stakeholder and partnership approach

Paragraph 38: we appreciate the mention of strengthening the institutional capacities at the local level and would recommend adding the following specifics:

- Provide opportunities for dialogue and relationship building between local actors/leaders and refugees – especially women, youth and persons with special needs - to share ideas and to promote understanding of each other, of needs, of challenges and of potential solutions. This includes, including local authorities in refugees’ activities and events.

- Train local actors on human rights, on who refugees are, on how to receive refugees, how to meet needs and on how to live with refugees. Provide opportunities for the host community to work on refugee programmes.

Paragraph 40: The mention of **refugee-led organizations in reference to civil society** organizations is appreciated. However, given the unique expertise, based on lived experience, that refugee-led organizations possess, we recommend to dedicate a paragraph to refugee-led organizations. Such a paragraph should emphasize the value of involving and supporting refugee-led organizations that utilize refugee skills & experiences, in refugee responses. It should also emphasize the importance of training and capacity building to empower refugees to engage in different aspects of refugee response, including networking with other refugee leaders and policy advocacy.

Paragraph 41: In noting the value of **faith-based organizations**, we recommend to note in more detail the important roles they can play, including:

- Support a range of amenities and services that benefit the community, including youth centres, sports fields and hospitals.
- Address the root causes of conflict in countries of origin and countries of asylum.
- Spread messages of peace, humanity and togetherness - Support inter-settlement dialogue and community outreach programmes by refugees, hold open discussions between communities
- Provide psychosocial support using the religious aspect
- Support people from different religion, and advocate for local integration, which sets a positive example.

Paragraph 44: We greatly appreciate the language highlighting the important role that **sports and cultural activities** can play in social development, inclusion, cohesion, and well-being. We would urge to retain this language and even possibly strengthen it by clarifying the language in the last sentence to read: "...to increase access for both refugees and the host community, to sporting and cultural facilities and activities in refugee-hosting areas." We also suggest including specific language such as, Empower and employ refugee coaches to establish refugees as role models and to attract refugees into specific sports

B Areas in need of support

1. Reception and admission

1.1 Early warning, preparedness and contingency planning

Paragraph 56: In the final point under this paragraph, which addresses "...ensuring standby capacity.... Including.... Human resources committed in advance." we recommend specifying: "human resources, with with relevant language skills and cultural competencies, and including refugees."

Paragraph 57: In mentioning how UNHCR, States and relevant stakeholders will contribute resources and expertise, we recommend including the following important specifics:

- Involve refugees in the host country to support new arrivals by involving them starting with immediate reception arrangements
- Involve refugee community leaders, including youth and women in efforts to identify those with specific needs, such as UASC, or survivors of violence or others
- Include mental health care and psychosocial health as part of the immediate emergency response; this is an essential aspect of protection, both to enable people are able to discuss traumatic events that they have experienced or witnessed and to heal from them.

1.2 Immediate reception arrangements

Paragraph 57: Refugees who have experienced forced displacement themselves have a unique understanding of the reception process and bring valuable skills, including language abilities and cultural awareness. Therefore, we would like it to be mentioned that: “refugees should play an active role in the reception process including the identifying those with specific needs such as victims of violence, sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and unaccompanied or separated children (UASC) and others with specific needs.”

1.3 Safety and security

Paragraph 59: We recommend specific language noting that: “Security and police in charge of refugee communities, should be trained and educated as much as possible from the same background and culture to be employed.” Also, it is important to note that an important aspect of safety and security is building good relations between refugees and the host community, thus from reception onwards it is important to avoid competition over natural resources and there should always be support for host communities.

1.4 Registration and documentation

Paragraph 61: Skilled interpreters need to translate for asylum seekers throughout the asylum process in order to be sure that refugees’ information is correctly understood and documented. Similarly, it is essential to provide information on the asylum process in refugees’ mother tongue. Therefore, in listing resources and expertise that States and relevant stakeholders will contribute, we propose adding the following:

- “Ensuring that those collecting registration data and providing information about the asylum process speak the relevant languages used by refugees or that skilled interpreters are used to facilitate this process.”
- “Ensuring registration at the local level and even home visits for those with disabilities.”
- “Cooperating with or Involving refugees, including youth and women, in conducting outreach and collecting registration data.”

Additionally, we appreciate the first two bullet points, which mention biometrics. We urge more specific explanation, such as “incorporating technology and biometrics such as using thumb prints to confirm identity in order to ensure to ensure equity in service delivery and resource provision and aid effective monitoring.”

1.5 Addressing specific needs

Paragraph 63: It is essential that those who have special needs, such as unaccompanied children, survivors of survivors of conflict, violence trafficking or other traumatic events have immediate access to mental health and psychosocial support. Therefore we urge strengthening this paragraph by mentioning specifically and clearly that girls, boys, women and men who have experienced or witnessed neglect, abuse, violence, or exploitation, can access immediately access mental health-care services and psychosocial support.”

Paragraph 64: We welcome the mention of States and relevant stakeholders contributing resources and expertise in support of host countries support to provide psychosocial support. However we recommend dedicating a bullet point to the provision of mental health care and

psychosocial support rather than lumping it in together with health care; please see the following language:

- culturally sensitive mental health care and psychosocial support for girls, boys, women and men who have experienced or witnessed neglect, abuse, violence, or exploitation.

2. Meeting needs and supporting communities

Paragraph 70: The last sentence referencing urban refugees is weak. We recommend the following language: An increasing number of refugees live in urban areas, where it is difficult, if not impossible to use traditional camp-oriented approaches to delivering services focused on refugees. This urban reality presents an opportunity to strengthen the existing services that serve both refugees and the host community, and to support refugees to work together with their host community neighbours to assess and improve the services and protection space in their neighbourhoods.

2.1 Education

Paragraph 72: Education is of paramount importance to refugee youth. We recommend adding language to emphasize the value of education, as follows: “Education is important for peaceful coexistence when refugee and host community children can study together they learn to live together.” And, “When refugees are educated they are better able to solve problems and promote peace in their home country.”

Paragraph 73: We recommend to add additional specific points noted below:

- “Support the expansion and enhanced quality of:....including more educational programmes available to refugees at the local level so refugees and host community children have more choice.... “ This includes investing in education and participation programmes for young refugees by funding local actors and allowing administrative flexibility to meet the needs of refugees in their area of responsibility. It also includes education data management systems that capture enrollment and retention data on refugees.”
- Meet the specific needs of refugee children and youth “... through... efforts to address discrimination and promote inclusion and integration for refugees...; ... Refugee-led one-on-one mentoring and tutoring to support children and youth who have missed years of school; and help to ensure access to educational opportunities; access to education in their mother tongue, or support to maintain mastery of their mother tongue; ongoing language support in the language of instruction, and mobile education programmes that can be easily accessed where young refugees are.
- Expand access to secondary and tertiary education by acknowledging and accepting educational certificates from the country of origin, or countries of asylum and widening scholarship opportunities in the country of asylum or third countries.
- Ensure innovative learning opportunities for youth, women, persons with disabilities and others who are not able to access secondary or vocational or university education.

2.2 Jobs and livelihoods

Paragraph 74: We welcome the strengthened and more detailed language on jobs and livelihoods. Below are some points that could be included in the bullet points in this paragraph.

- facilitate programmes that place refugees with host community companies and that invest in refugee entrepreneurs
- support grants and small loans for start-ups and IGAs/particularly for women and youth.
- facilitate partnerships with the private sector to promote refugee job training and job seeking services to support recently arrived refugees to obtain a better position when entering the job market.
- Facilitate safe places where refugees and host community members trade freely and safely.

2.3 Health

Paragraph 76: *We recommend adding the following bullet points after “this will include resources and expertise to:”*

- Engage refugee community leaders to address religious and cultural norms that affect health and to Educate the community about managing illnesses and the spread of disease
- Ensure health services are youth friendly and are accessible for refugee youth
- Ensure access to mental health and psychosocial support and to reproductive health services.

2.4 Gender

Paragraph 77: We welcome the language focused on addressing the specific challenges and experiences related to the displacement experience that women and girls may experience. We suggest adding the specific language within the paragraph or the bullet points below:

- Create vocational centres for women where they can learn new skills so they can be empowered financially and can help their families.
- Empower women and girls and facilitate gender equality by supporting training and capacity building for girls and boys, men and women to enable women and girls to take part in decision-making and policy making.

2.5 Children

Paragraph 78: *We appreciate the specific language dedicated to children. We recommend ensuring the following detailed points are added: “ Ensure that families paired with unaccompanied minors receive appropriate training and monitoring.”*

However, we note the absence of any specific language addressing the unique needs of Youth. Thus we recommend inserting a paragraph either before or after the paragraph on children to read as follows.

X.X Youth

Reliable statistics on the actual number of refugee youth (aged 15 - 24 years) 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. Conflicts 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. The marginalization, isolation and hardship of forced displacement can also increase young refugees vulnerability to violence. But, refugee youth possess drive, energy entrepreneurship, language abilities, technological savvy and other capabilities and skills, refugee youth play essential roles in supporting their peers, families and communities. The international community is recognizing that involving refugee youth is essential in shaping lasting peace. It is important to reach out to refugee youth, to empower them to be engaged in their communities, to build their capacity as protection actors and to work with them to ensure that services address the specific needs of young women and men.

2.6 Accommodation, energy, and natural resource management

Paragraphs 80-81: *We note that these paragraphs do not distinguish and address the specific challenges and opportunities in urban as compared to rural or camp situations.*

We recommend adding specific language on:

- *ensuring rent support to ensure safe accommodation in urban contexts.*
- *Facilitating community centers to enable refugees and host community an opportunity to meet and exchange culture and ideas.*
- *Facilitating access to electricity and internet for refugees in urban, rural and camp contexts.*

3 Solutions

3.1 Support for countries of origin and voluntary repatriation

Paragraphs 91: This paragraph does not adequately address the perspective of refugees. We recommend strengthening this paragraph by including the following points.

- Repatriation needs to be recognized as a process of building understanding, trust and confidence about the protection situation supports and services in the country of origin; Refugees need to be supported throughout this process
- In order for repatriation to be sustainable, it is essential to address the root causes of conflict in country of origin. Refugees themselves should be engaged in these peacebuilding efforts.
- Security and safety should be tested before returning back participation states to gather information about the security information in the country of origin, especially for minority groups or marginalized groups of concern.
- To return to a country of origin after fleeing due to conflict or persecution necessitates transparency and mechanisms that build trust and engagement amongst refugees.
- UNHCR, the host country and the country of origin need to coordinate to ensure proper documentation for returning families so that they are not without documentation during the process of leaving one country and registering in their country of origin.
- Involved States, UNHCR and other key stakeholders should support voluntary repatriation as needed and appropriate with transportation, travel and other personal documentation, and material or monetary support.
- It is also important to put in place an emergency evacuation team in case individuals or groups of refugees face protection problems during the repatriation process.

3.2 Resettlement

Paragraph 96: We strongly support the language emphasizing the value of resettlement. We strongly support language noting that “more countries should open up and receive resettled refugees so that the burden and responsibility of hosting refugees is shared.” We also suggest adding more language about support for improving resettlement processes through learning from good practices, such as previous refugees helping new refugees to resettle.

Paragraph 97: We welcome the language supporting new approaches to resettlement. We recommend including language that specifically notes exploring the possibility for regional resettlement to third countries within the same geographic region as the country of origin and the country of first asylum.

Paragraph 96-99: In discussing resettlement in general we urge that language be included that noting that:

- “Refugee background, age and health should be considered.”
- “The process of resettlement should be shortened.”
- “In all cases of resettlement there should be a good collaboration between the Government and the third countries to facilitate a smooth process.”
- For those refugees who are resettled it is valuable to **facilitate exchanges of information** between newly arrived refugees and those with lived experience in the resettlement country.

3.3 Other pathways for admission to third countries

Paragraphs 100 - 102: *We strongly support the language on other pathways for admission to third countries as a complement to resettlement and efforts to increase their availability. However, we stress that such pathways should be a complement to not a substitute for increased and more varied resettlement options.*

3.4 Local solutions

Paragraphs 103 - 105: We would suggest to enhance refugees’ perspective about local solutions. We suggest adding the following bullet points to paragraph 105:

- Support programmes fostering respect, tolerance and social cohesion and put in place public information campaigns as well as legislation, policy that combat racism and xenophobia and help the public to understand refugees situation.