



# Global Youth Advisory Council

2019 Annual Report





# Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees appointed the first Global Youth Advisory Council (GYAC) in December 2017 in order to create a sustainable mechanism to facilitate the engagement of young people of concern in policy and practice and to further advance UNHCR's work with and for youth. The GYAC serves as a consultative group that advocates on issues relating to the protection and development of young people who are refugees, internally displaced or stateless and their communities. The GYAC works with refugees, displaced persons and the host community in countries of asylum and in countries of resettlement to bring a youth perspective on a broad range of issues into the work of UNHCR at all levels. The GYAC is composed of 12 young women and young men between the ages of 18 and 26 who represent youth in all their diversity. UNHCR's Child Protection and Youth Unit (CPYU) and Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) jointly support and coordinate the work of the GYAC.

## What do GYAC delegates do?

- Consult with their communities to get broader input on the key challenges for refugees and recommendations for how to address them.
- Use their voices to represent and amplify the concerns and suggestions of young people in displacement contexts who might otherwise not be heard by speaking on panels at international conferences and meetings, including the High Commissioner's Dialogue, UNHCR Annual Consultation with NGOs, the Global Refugee Forum, the UN General Assembly, and other events and forums.
- Bring a youth perspective to local, national, regional and global level discussions on refugee policy and through interviews, social media, videos, blogs and videos.
- Review and provide feedback on policies, strategies, guidance documents and training products for UNHCR and partners and serve on reference groups for research or policy initiatives.
- Collaborate with local-level practitioners to improve the services for refugee and displaced youth.
- Develop and deliver capacity-building workshops to facilitate the participation, leadership and networking of youth in displacement contexts.
- Organize and facilitate sessions that highlight refugee and displaced youth perspectives for events such as the UNHCR High Commissioner's Dialogue, the NGO Consultations or other forums.







## Background

During 2015-2016, UNHCR and WRC led the Global Refugee Youth Consultations (GRYC), which involved over 1,450 youth from 34 countries. The GRYC was a participatory process that engaged young people to share their perspectives on the challenges that young refugees face and empowered them to propose solutions. Participating youth crafted a framework for action, the Core Actions for Refugee Youth, and recommendations for different actors on how to implement that framework. The GYAC is committed to the operationalization of the Core Actions at all levels.

In December 2018, the High Commissioner acknowledged GYAC contributions to the process of drafting the Global Compact on Refugees and challenged them to remain engaged in its implementation, including participation in the process leading to the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in December 2019. He also encouraged GYAC members to use their talents to promote youth participation at the local and national level, as well as internationally. During 2019, the GYAC has been active in meeting those challenges!



# Who are the



**Gabriela Ernestina Osorio Rodriguez**  
Originally from El Salvador  
Currently living in Mexico

**Abdul Karim Albrm**  
Originally from Syria  
Currently living in Germany



**Mariama Saran Sow**  
Originally from Guinea  
Currently living in Germany



**Hadjara Maikano Fadila**  
Originally from the Central African Republic  
Currently living in Cameroon



**Ibrahim Sallet Mahamat**  
Originally from the Central African Republic  
Currently living in Morocco



**Ismael Gamboa Ocampo**  
Originally from Colombia  
Currently living in Colombia





# GYAC Members?



**Asif Safdary**

Originally from Afghanistan  
Currently living in Austria



**Faridah Luanda**

Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo  
Currently living in Uganda



**Foni Joyce Vuni**

Originally from South Sudan  
Currently living in Kenya



**Barthelemy Ngane Mwanza**

Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo  
Currently living in Zimbabwe



**Safia Ibrahimkhel**

Originally from Afghanistan  
Currently living in Pakistan



**Arash Bordbar**

Originally from Iran  
Currently living in Australia





# A Note from the Co-Chairs

It has been a great journey for the past two years! It has been amazing to lead the GYAC and to work with young leaders – refugee and displaced youth. We are bringing the voices of our communities to the global level and we are joining conversations about the issues that are important to us. Throughout the past two years, the GYAC has been working to operationalize the Core Actions for Refugee Youth, which serve as a framework to help humanitarian actors shape youth-specific policy, guidance and programmes.

During 2019, the second year of our existence as the GYAC, we have appreciated the chance to strengthen our collaboration with different teams and units within UNHCR as well as to build relationships with external stakeholders. We have continued to serve as a bridge between the local and global levels and, this year, GYAC members have been more active nationally and regionally. GYAC members brought a youth perspective to the UNHCR Annual Consultations with NGOs in Geneva as well as to the first UNHCR Africa Consultations with NGOs and Multi-Stakeholders held in South Africa. We have also valued the opportunity to work more closely with the UN Youth Envoy and the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action and to find synergies in our work.

GYAC coordinated closely with the UNHCR Education in efforts to advance refugees' inclusion in national education systems. A GYAC member represented refugee youth and advocated for inclusion at the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum in New York in April. In

conjunction with World Refugee Day in June, three GYAC members participated in "The Other 1 Percent – Refugee Students at Higher Education Institutions Worldwide", a conference organized by the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs and facilitated workshops for refugee students resulting in the establishment of the Tertiary Refugee Student Network.

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***"The empowerment of refugee and host community youth, building on their talent, potential, and energy, supports resilience and eventual solutions. The active participation and engagement of refugee and host community youth will be supported by States and relevant stakeholders, including through projects that recognize, utilize and develop their capacities and skills and foster their physical and emotional well-being."***

***-GCR para 77***

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During 2019, GYAC completed its first membership transition, with eight members graduating and four new members joining, including the first IDP member. GYAC members have continued to develop expertise in their areas of focus. GYAC members have taken a more active role in climate and environmental issues, locally and regionally, and two GYAC members represented refugee voices at the UN Climate Change Summit held in New York in October. GYAC members have also

advocated actively for greater recognition of the importance of mental health and psychosocial support for young people who have been displaced; two GYAC members brought the refugee youth perspective to a Ministerial Conference in the Netherlands.

During 2018, GYAC contributed a series of detailed recommendations to the drafting of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), which resulted in 17 mentions of youth in the final version and language promoting youth participation as a key aspect of the whole of society approach to comprehensive refugee response.

The GYAC has been actively engaged in preparation for the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) throughout 2019. GYAC members participated in the first, second and third GRF preparatory meetings and co-sponsored the Education and Protection Capacity themes. GYAC, together with the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, produced a tip sheet on pledging for youth, organized a spotlight session and held a marketplace booth. Most importantly, the GYAC submitted a GRF pledge to provide technical expertise to support refugee youth participation at the country level, including capacity building for refugee youth and persons who work with and for them.



***"The Global Refugee Forum is an opportunity to reinvigorate protection; to bring in new actors and new ways of working in order to improve how we are working with each other, with States and with affected people of all ages and genders."***

**-Safia Ibrahimkhil**

GYAC engagement in the GRF has shown how refugees can be key stakeholders and has demonstrated the value of refugee participation in the decision-making process. Many stakeholders, including UNHCR and States, have encouraged our active participation, which has increased and enhanced refugee representation broadly at the global level.

One of the most important aspects of GYAC's work in 2019 was the design and delivery of the "We Believe in Youth!" training package to operationalize the Core Actions and strengthen participation by refugee, displaced and host community youth. The GYAC developed the workshop sessions as part of an induction training for new members in July and then partnered with the African Youth Action Network (AYAN) to pilot workshops for young refugees in three locations in Uganda: Arua, Mbarara and Kampala. It was an amazing opportunity to work with other young refugee leaders who do important work at the local level and to operationalize the Core Actions at the national and local level. The pilot was very successful and we are hoping to build on this and organize more country level workshops in the coming year.

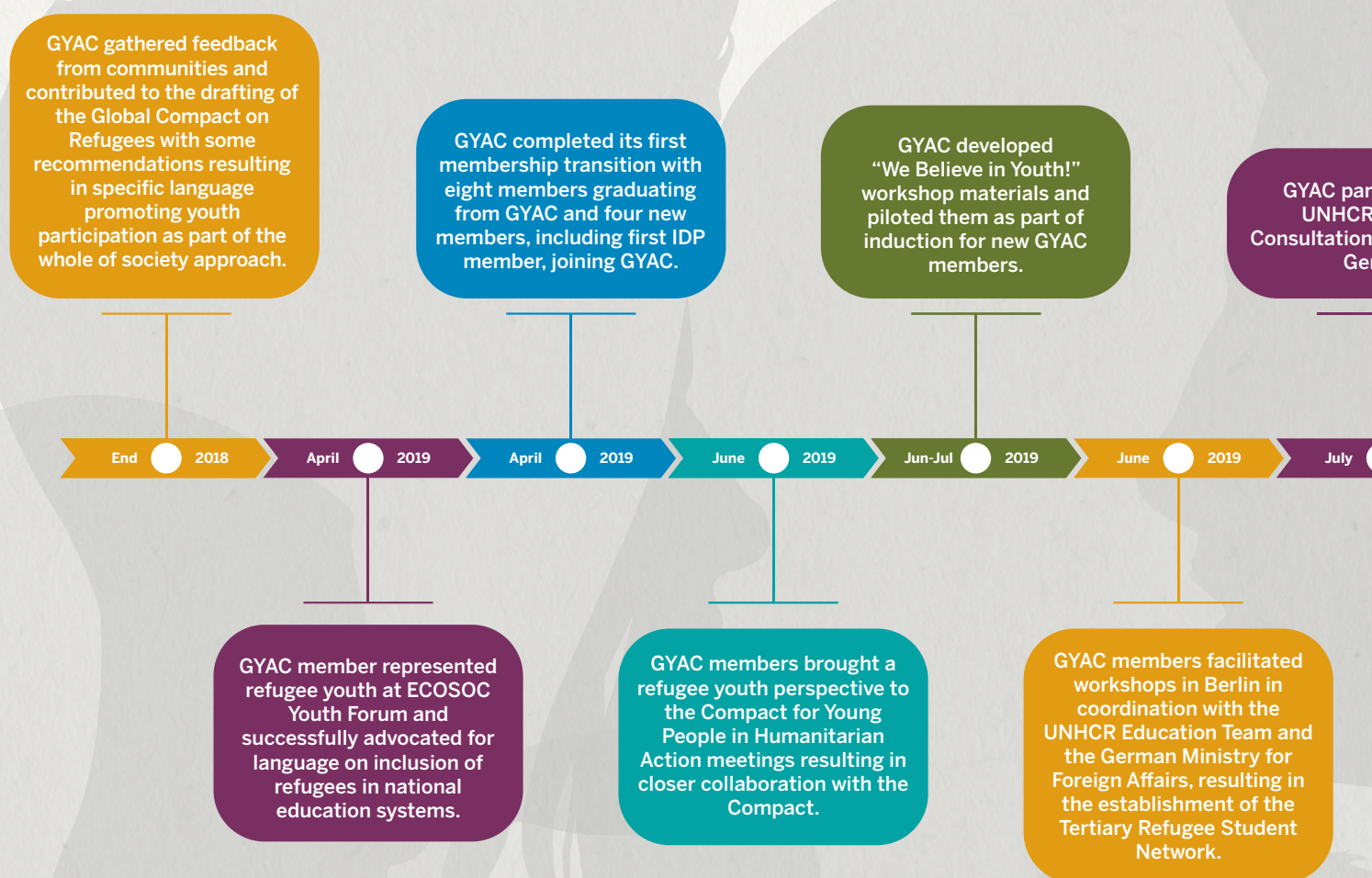
It has been a fruitful two years for the GYAC and we are please to share these achievements.

**- Arash Bordbar & Foni Joyce Vuni**



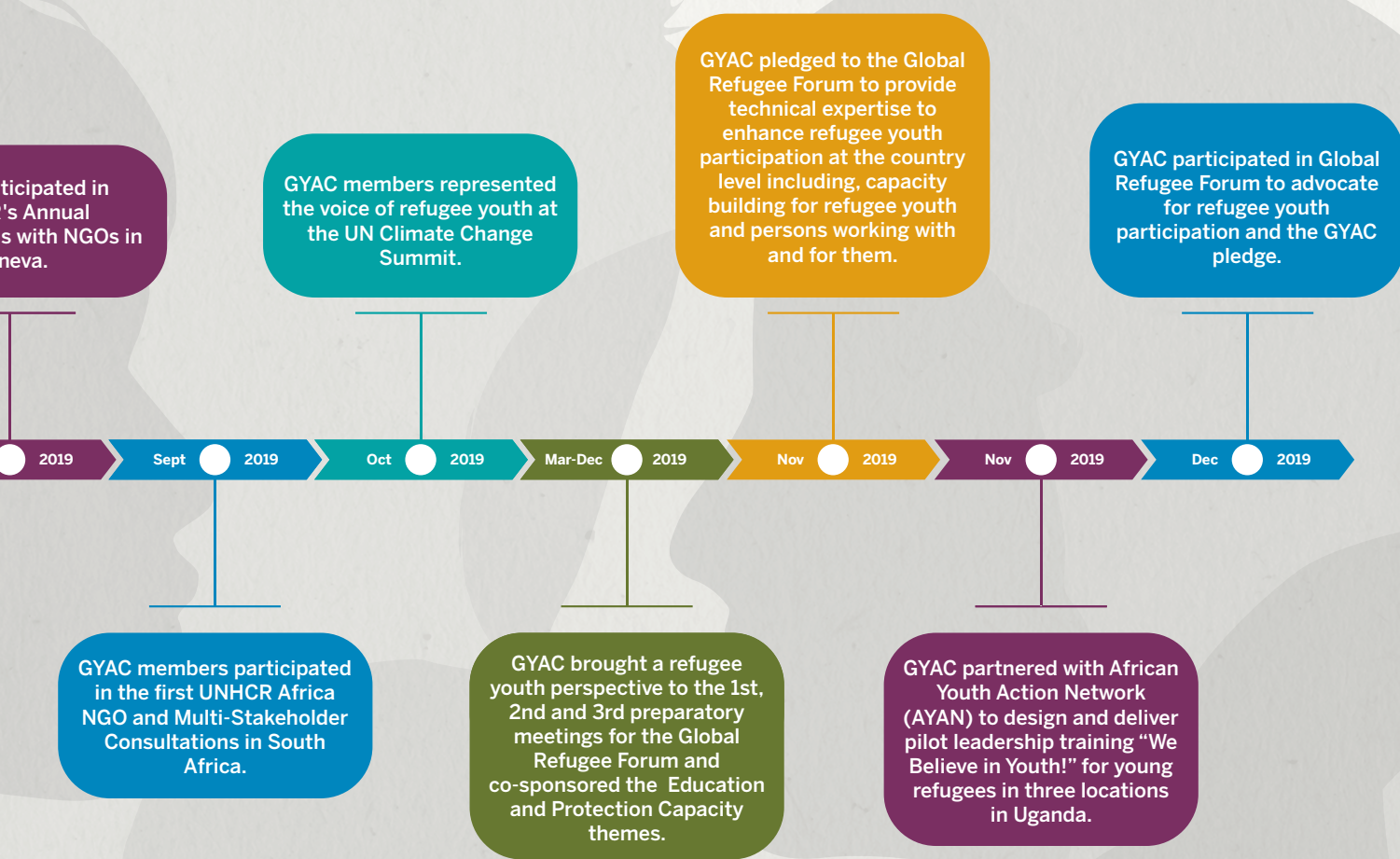


# GYAC Achievements





# ements 2019





## Africa

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# Barthelemy Ngane Mwanza

Barth is 26 years old and comes from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He has lived in the Tongogara refugee camp, in Zimbabwe, with his sister and her family since their flight from DRC in 2012.

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*"Youth are drivers of Disaster Risk Reduction actions.... Young people are actively engaged at the local, national and global levels in recovery, rehabilitation, reconstruction as well as preparedness."*

*-Barth Ngane Mwanza*

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Barth has been active on the steering committee of the Adolescent Girls and Young Women Empowerment Programme, funded by the Youth Initiative Fund. As a GYAC delegate and youth leader, Barth is passionate about supporting young refugees to develop their potential and not abandon their dreams. Barth is also a climate action champion at the local, national and global levels.

***“Sports bring people together and support protection and peace-building. The aspect of serious competition is also important. When one refugee is playing in a visible way – it makes all the other young refugees feel like they are playing too. It encourages others to participate in sport. It makes them feel integrated.”***

***–Barth Ngane Mwanza***

This year I helped facilitate the inclusion of refugees in a national soccer tournament that brought together 20 teams from the four corners of Zimbabwe. I also created a yoga team for girls and young women at the Tongogara refugee camp, which brings young women together and promotes positive thinking and spiritual, physical and mental well-being.

I participated in the First Youth Symposium in Zimbabwe on Peace and Climate Change, I worked together with youth from around Zimbabwe to identify climate-related problems and find ways to address them. In September, I attended the first UN Youth Climate Summit held in New York and participated in a “Climate Slam” where I highlighted how young refugees responded to the aftermath of cyclone Idai in the Zimbabwean Tongogara Refugee Camp. Back in Tongogara Refugee Camp, I organized a series of meetings to update the young refugees who were not able to attend the UN Youth Climate Summit. Regionally, I represented the voice of young refugees as a participant in the



first UNHCR Africa Consultations with NGOs and Multi-stakeholders on the protection and development of refugees living in Southern Africa. I also participate in a workshop in Kigali, Rwanda, on the availability of college counseling resources for refugees.



## Africa

# Faridah Luanda

Faridah is a 21 year-old refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). She was separated from her family in DRC due to conflict and violence. She now lives with her son and brother in the Kyaka II Refugee Settlement in Uganda.







Faridah, who is a survivor of violence and early marriage, is a passionate advocate for women's empowerment. She uses her story to inspire other young people to transform their vulnerabilities into strengths. In Kyaka II, Faridah built a solar-powered music studio and started Da Vision Group, which works to improve young refugees' lives through music, dance, educational and livelihoods activities.

A lot has changed since I joined the GYAC in July 2019, not only for me and my group, but also for the community. I have learned new approaches to analyze problems and resolve them by finding solutions through available tools and resources in my community.

Locally, we have started a campaign in primary and secondary schools that promotes hygiene for young girls, encourages girls to stay in school and advocates for the prevention of early marriages. At the community level, I teach English, soap-making and sewing reusable sanitary pads. Access to sanitary pads helps young girls to stay in school during their period and helps our poorest communities.

At the district level, refugee and host community youth came together to discuss the engagement of young refugees in the national policy-making and better programming. We shared problems, priorities and possible solutions useful to the district.

At a national level, I participated in the Ugandan Youth Moot Parliament, which



brought together a cross-sector of young people from all parts of Uganda to engage in discussions with policy makers at a national level. In this space, we shared ideas, representing the voice of multiple communities, some isolated, working

together on issues regarding youth participation in national policy-making. I also spoke as a panelist at the National Girl Summit – organized by Girls Not Brides Uganda – in Kampala, to share my journey advocating against child marriage.

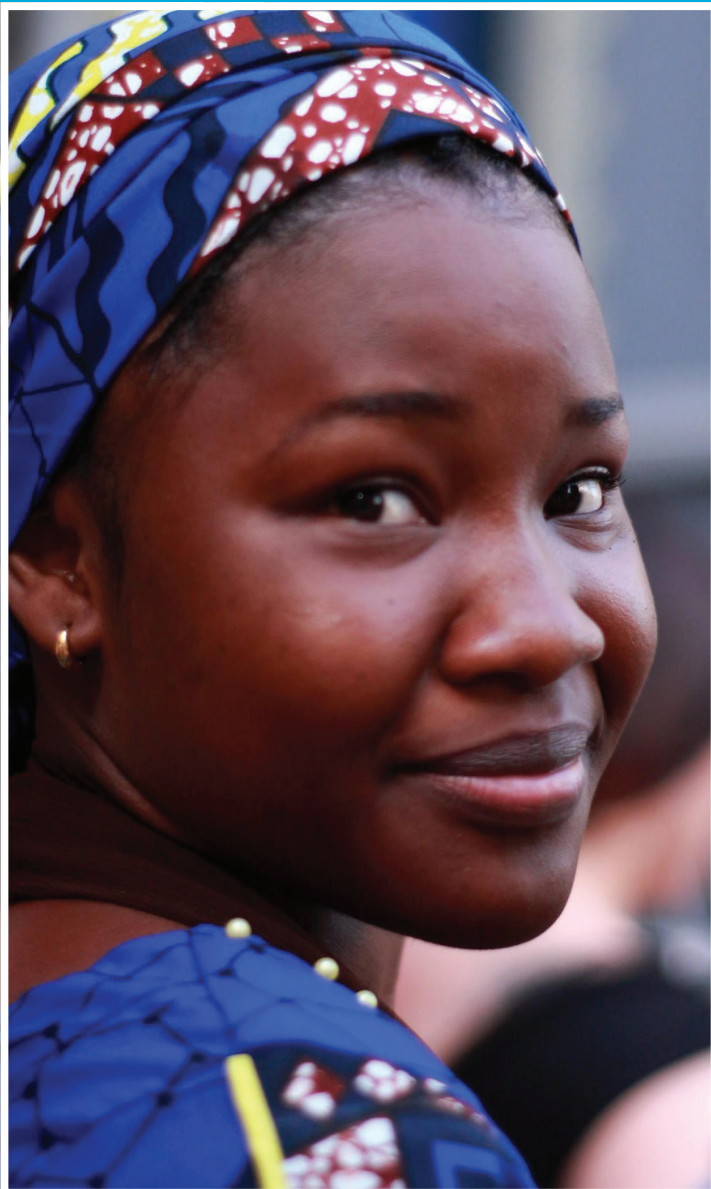


## Africa

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# Hadjara Maikano Fadila

Hadjara is a 19-year-old refugee from the Central African Republic (CAR) who sought refuge in Cameroon with her family in 2014.





**Hadjara is an advocate for girls' education and is active in promoting hygiene and awareness on the importance of girls caring for themselves. She is also active as an environmentalist and teaches those around her about small actions that can save the planet. Hadjara joined GYAC in July 2019 and hopes to use this platform to amplify her work on these key issues.**

*As a member of the GYAC, the most important aspect of my work has been sharing with my community what I have been learning through my experiences in Geneva. In Douala, I organized an activity in which we identified the issues affecting young refugees related to the lack of education, health, safety, entertainment and integration in order to come up with an action plan.*

*For the International Day of the Girl Child, I organized discussions with my community on the challenges that girls encounter regarding forced child marriage, sexual violence and prostitution. Based on this analysis, we developed a sketch condemning these acts and behaviors to raise community awareness, not only about the consequences of such acts, but also to advocate for girls and young women's rights.*

*At a national level, I had the opportunity to meet with the President of the Cameroonian National Council of Youth to discuss irregular migration, an issue of interest for both youth and young refugees in Cameroon.*





## Africa

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# Foni Joyce Vuni

Foni is a 27-year-old who comes from South Sudan. Her parents fled the southern part of Sudan in 1991 due to the civil war – her father was a journalist fleeing the state – and sought asylum in Kenya, where Foni was born. She currently lives in Nairobi, Kenya.





Foni has established an organization that links unemployed youth to opportunities and mentors. She is a passionate advocate for refugee education and for the role of women and youth as peace builders. Recently, Foni has been active in the South Sudanese peace process. She believes the GYAC should support and inspire youth to play a significant role in bringing solutions to their communities, especially as peace builders.

On a local and national level, I took part in Dafikeso's annual student conference, where I interacted and exchanged ideas with students, some of whom I am currently mentoring.



I have also taken part in a campaign "Step for Safety" for which we walked to support families forced to flee by raising funds and awareness for refugees in Kenya. More recently, I was invited to a film festival along with UNHCR representatives to award refugee film editors, actors and others.

At the country level, I took part in the 7th African Union Humanitarian symposium where I shared my experience and advocated for the importance of education. During this conference, I highlighted the importance of collaboration amongst different levels of actors, the positive role of girls and women, as well as their strengths and the challenges they may face. I also attended the UNHCR strategic planning meeting and the sexual reproductive health rights training.



**During 2019, the international work with GYAC was intense!** I participated in the World Refugee Day Conference in Berlin and facilitated a workshop for students. At the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, I spoke on a panel organized by the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action about GYAC advocacy to advance refugee youth participation in the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees. Together with Barth, I participated in the UN Climate Summit in New York in September 2019, which was also an opportunity for us to reach out to the UN Youth Envoy.

One of the most important aspects of my work, as a member of the GYAC, in 2019, was helping to develop and facilitate the "We Believe in Youth!" pilot workshops, in collaboration with the African Youth Action Network (AYAN), for young refugees in Arua, Mbarara and Kampala, Uganda, together with three other GYAC members. We were able to work with incredible young leaders who do great work at the local level by making use of what is available to them.



## The Americas

Gabriela  
Ernestina Osorio  
Rodriguez



Gabriela is 21 years old. Following a period of separation from her mother, she and her family fled El Salvador due to violence eight years ago. They now live in Saltillo, Mexico, and she has overcome bullying and other integration difficulties in her host community. She now studies business administration and works with an organization focusing on women's and migrants' rights and advocating for tertiary education amongst young refugees.





The most important aspects of being part of GYAC have been growing as a refugee and connecting with other young people like me. My work in the shelter includes guiding young people through workshops to help them have a dynamic and mentally stimulating stay. We host activities related to Mexican culture, but our focus is also for young people to continue their studies. It is very gratifying to see how my work as a volunteer, in shelters and migrants' homes, has paid off. I have helped young people return to school or even change their expectations.

In November, I participated as a panelist in a tertiary education conference for refugees along with several other refugee students. Only three per cent of young refugees obtain a university diploma. By sharing our experiences, as refugee graduates, we hope we can influence others in following this path.

During the visit of the High Commissioner at the Migrant House, in Saltillo, we discussed UNHCR's integration programme promoting refugees and asylum-seekers' inclusion in the Mexican local economy.





## The Americas

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# Ismael Gamboa Ocampo

Ismael is 24 years old and is an internally displaced young man from Colombia. He was displaced with his family at age six as a result of the violence in Colombia, and moved to Cucuta, on the border with Venezuela.

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*"As young people, we don't want to be internally displaced or remain victims, that's why we build our own stories. We won't let war write them for us."*

*-Ismael Gamboa Ocampo*

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Ismael has worked on a series of community-level activities with a local organization to search for missing persons and to advocate for peace in Colombia. More recently, he has engaged with Venezuelan refugee youth coming to Colombia.

As a member of the GYAC, I have organized participatory diagnostic exercises at national-level gatherings of young people from different areas in Colombia. These meetings not only allowed me to get to know the strengths and needs of youth organizations, but also helped me to develop organizational capacity for dialogue and violence prevention.

As youth organizations, we have marched in rejection of the war that is forcing us to flee. As youth organizations We have resisted: we refuse to be involved in war and we will continue marching against it.

At a regional-national level, I have conducted multi-actor dialogues and conflict transformation workshops to support young people to generate dialogue and prevent violence in their territories.

Internationally, I have advocated, in a series of events and conferences, for the human rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs). I participated via video conference in a side-session of the 74th UN General Assembly (UNGA) to raise awareness for the voice of IDPs and was able to share opportunities, good practices and challenges together with the Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons. More recently, I also participated in a UNGA side-session, in partnership with UNICEF, on the protection of displaced children.

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**Us children and young people look out to education to transform our realities.**

Ismael Gamboa, Colombia  
 Member of UNHCR Global Youth Advisory Council





## Asia

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# Safia Ibrahimkhel



Safia is a 26-year-old who was born and grew up in an Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan. Safia's family briefly returned to Afghanistan but fled again to Pakistan due to war and violence.

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*"Bringing together the vision of young people today and the experience of older generations can create solutions and answers to the challenges communities around the world are facing."*

*-Safia Ibrahimkhel*

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As a GYAC delegate, Safia wants to take advantage of the opportunity to build direct dialogue with other key stakeholders in the international community and discuss key issues such as educational opportunities for adolescent girls and young women.

In 2019, I participated in a series of workshops and events to advocate for tertiary education amongst young refugees. For example, I attended a meeting, organized by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of DAFI (The Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholars and other refugee students in Berlin. I was also invited to introduce the GYAC and give a presentation on networking. These experiences made me realize the potential I have as a young leader to contribute into building inclusive communities and showing the resilience of young refugees to other young people.

As a GYAC member, the most important aspect of my work this year was the chance I had to work with young refugees in the Rwandan Kiziba refugee camp. I facilitated a series of workshops in which I gave presentations on networking and youth empowerment. During this visit, I also spent two days visiting different refugee camps in Rwanda.

On the national and regional level, I participated in the Summit of Youth Leaders from Pakistan and Afghanistan during which I discussed the present and future of young refugees.



## Asia

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# Arash Bordbar



Arash Bordbar, 26, is originally from Shiraz in Iran. He fled his home with his mother and brother and traveled to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where he lived for five years before being resettled to Australia in May 2015.

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*"The reason change happens and the reason things happen, is because WE make it happen..."*

*-Arash Bordbar*

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Arash believes other refugees should not have to make the same mistakes he did and could benefit from his learning. With that goal in mind, Arash has been involved in organizing events for the arrival of new refugees in Australia. For him, the GYAC is a way of bringing new ideas, perspectives and creative ways of approaching and addressing problems within the within the framework of UNHCR.



As a member of the GYAC, the most important aspect of my work, this year, was bringing the community's voices from the local level to the global level to influence some of the policies impacting their lives. I have also worked on empowering young people, not only at a community level, but also at a policy and decision-making level. We have had an important impact on refugee narratives, reinforcing our possibility as refugees to contribute to society.

Locally, I have been working with Western Sydney University. As a result, we have founded a programme – the Dream Scholarship – that provides easier access to higher education for refugees in Australia.

In 2019, I was honored to be chosen as an Australian Day Ambassador. I actively advocated for youth participation and was recently interviewed on Australian TV to discuss the involvement of young people and most particularly young refugees in politics.



Internationally, I was chosen as a Peace Ambassador for One Young World and as a Women Deliver Young Leader Ambassador and I spoke at the Canadian Refugee Conference. I have tried to use these speaking engagements to share my experience and journey as a refugee and to highlight the importance of refugees and other actors working together to make integration work.

I have been working with the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) to facilitate consultations with refugee

youth and to support them to engage with the Global Refugee Forum. I was recently elected to chair the APRRN. I am also an active member of the Amnesty International Refugee Advisory Group focused on the strategization of resettlement processes for refugees across the world. Finally, I have had the chance to share the perspective of young refugees in the UNHCR's strategic consultations to draft the Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Strategy.

## Europe

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# Asif Safdary

Asif is 26 years old and fled the conflict in Afghanistan at the age of 14. He traveled on his own as a separated child through Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Greece and Italy to seek protection and safety. He currently lives in Vienna, Austria.

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*“The 7 core actions for refugee youth, which were developed by refugee youth themselves, provide a framework on how the humanitarian actors can provide protection by working with and for refugee youth.”*

*-Asif Safdary*

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Asif helped found the Afghan Students Association in Austria. He believes the GYAC provides a platform for youth delegates and other young people to speak about their experiences as refugees, to assist policy makers in better understanding the situation of refugees and to give refugees, especially youth, a voice in global fora and State-led mechanisms and conferences.

The most important aspect of my work this year as a GYAC member was linking the work from the national level to the international level. I believe that showcasing best practice in small projects, at the national and community level, helps create positive changes.

As a member of the Afghan Students Association, we helped organize along with other Afghan associations a ceremony for all students who graduated from high school and university. Through this event, we showcase on a yearly basis the achievements of refugees and their contribution to the Austrian society. In this event, we tried to connect all levels of society, such as representatives of Austria and Afghanistan, as well as refugees.

The GYAC and Global Refugee-led Network (GRN) organized a session during the UNHCR Annual Consultations with NGOs on the Inclusion of refugees and other persons of concern in which I participated as a co-moderator. I, once again, emphasized the importance of the 7 core actions for refugee youth.

I spoke at the OSCE-Wide Youth Forum in Bratislava during the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship as an expert on new technologies and discussed the opportunities, challenges and threats of these. I used this chance to bring in the perspective of refugee youth in topics such as peace building, security and human rights, as well as education.





## Europe

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# Abdul Karim Albrm

Karim is 23 years old and is originally from Aleppo, Syria. He traveled with and supported a group of unaccompanied children through Lebanon, Turkey, Greece and the Balkans, assisting them to locate their families in Austria, Sweden and Germany. Karim finally sought asylum in Germany, where he now lives in Hamburg.

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*"When we talk about refugees who fled their countries, it is essential that we talk openly about how to address the stresses they face. It is important to talk about how to strengthen psychosocial health and resilience. As in any other transitional situation, psychosocial health is a key asset."*

*-Abdul Karim Albrm*

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In Hamburg, Karim has helped establish a National Youth Advisory Council for Refugees on Addiction and Trauma issues, which provides refugees with the opportunity to advise on the improvement of mental health programs and helps refugees and asylum seekers deal with stress and addiction problems in their native languages. As a member of the GYAC, Karim has supported youth to engage, at a local level, with decision makers and help them have a positive influence on their communities.

At a local level, the most important aspect of my work as a GYAC member has been breaking down prejudices against people with immigration and refugee backgrounds. I worked on a campaign organized by Plan International Germany promoting cultural acceptance in which statements and photographs were displayed on trains and TVs.

During a meeting with the Integration Senator in Hamburg, the National Youth Advisory Council for Refugees discussed prejudice, discrimination and cultural acceptance. We also talked about refugees' integration processes and suggested improvements. Finally, we raised the possibility of involving young refugees in the decision-making process. During the first International Conference on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Crisis Situations and the "See Me Safe" conference, hosted by Save the Children UK, I advocated, at a regional level, for the importance of MHPSS for young refugees. More recently, I also attended the Intergovernmental Consultation on Unaccompanied People in which I shared recommendations on family reunification with Member States.

At the European Development Days in Brussels, I emphasized on the global importance of education amongst refugees as a factor of integration in host communities.



## Europe

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# Mariama Saran Sow



Mariama is 26 years old and is from Guinea. Faced with the risk of female genital mutilation in her home country and the prospects of a forced marriage to a man much older than her, Mariama fled in 2010 as an unaccompanied child and sought asylum in Germany, where she currently resides.

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*"Psychosocial help is a key factor that needs to be taken into consideration. If the head is not calm, the heart cannot open to others."*

*-Mariama Saran Sow*

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Mariama believes that the GYAC empowers delegates to speak out on important and often taboo protection issues like sexual and gender-based violence. As a GYAC delegate, she works to improve protection for vulnerable children and fights against sexual violence against women, particularly in conflict situations.



Two actions describe the importance of my work as a GYAC member in 2019. First of all, we conducted consultations in Dortmund and collected feedback on the needs and challenges faced by refugees in the community. Locally, we encourage women and girls to continue studying and help them raise their children as independent women. In this structure, we also teach German, which can help refugees better integrate with their host communities.

Throughout the year I have helped organize a series of events at a local level. We held an interaction day in Dortmund for refugees to connect with the host community.

Later in the year, we organized an exchange session to which we invited refugee women. During this activity, we not only discussed methods beneficial for refugees who suffer from trauma, but we also discussed the role of refugee women in society.

On the national level, I had the chance to meet some of the politicians from the Social Democratic Party (SPD) of Germany. As a refugees' spokesperson I was able to brief them on the situation and living conditions of refugees in Germany.



In Amsterdam, I participated in a side-session of the first International Conference on Refugees' Psychology and Social-psychology in which I shared my experience as a survivor of violence and condemned sexist behavior as well as sexual violence.

## Middle East and North Africa

# Ibrahim Sallet Mahamat

Ibrahim is 25 years old and is from the Central African Republic (CAR). Ibrahim was studying in Morocco when war broke out in CAR in 2013, causing him to seek asylum in Morocco, where he currently lives in Rabat.

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*“Young people displaced by war should not be excluded. Solutions exist. Together, if we meet, we can do better.”*

*-Ibrahim Sallet Mahamat*

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In Morocco, Ibrahim is the President of Living Together, a local NGO that supports refugees to integrate into Moroccan society. Being a member of the GYAC allows him to engage and help refugees locally and globally. He believes that every refugee has the right to live a normal life.

In 2019, I gave particular attention to the work of Living Together at the national level. One of our main tasks included raising awareness amongst school and university students, as well as young refugees, on asylum in Morocco. In partnership with Youth Initiative Fund, we have been conducting sensitization workshops on a national level.

In August, I attended in Morocco the World Merit Summit in which 500 young leaders and activists participated. Along with the other participants, we developed a significant impact strategy to adopt a way of life in line with the SDGs.

In October, I attended the Youth Innovation Summit, also in Morocco. In this event, we made use of our ideas, creativity and skills and came up with solutions to solve some of the biggest economic and social issues regarding cybersecurity.

On the regional level, I participated to the Continental Consultative Summit in Kigali, Rwanda. The event focused on solidarity and shared responsibility to address some of the root causes of forced displacement in Africa. In this meeting, I had the opportunity to share my experience as a displaced person and advocated for policy managing the integration process of refugees in Africa.







# Looking Forward: **GYAC 2020**

The GYAC, with the support of UNHCR and the Women's Refugee Commission, will continue our efforts to operationalize the Core Actions for Refugee Youth. We will continue to advocate for youth participation, youth leadership and youth-sensitive services. In line with our GRF pledge, we will provide strategic leadership and technical assistance to strengthen the skills, capacity and networking abilities of refugee, internally displaced and host community youth and the actors who work with and for them. We will strengthen our current partnerships with actors and networks that work for and with youth. We will collaborate more with refugee-led organizations, especially at the local and national level. We will reach out to host youth organizations and networks in the communities and countries where we live. We will also work to ensure the continuity of knowledge, capacity, purpose and commitment, while also renewing the GYAC by bringing in new leadership and new members. We look forward to working with you and sharing our achievements in 2020.

