



# ECUADOR

## National Refugee Youth Consultation

### Summary Report

08<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> February 2016



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# Global Refugee Youth Consultations

## Background

The Global Refugee Youth Consultations (GRYC) were launched in July 2015 at the UNHCR-NGO Consultations in Geneva. A joint initiative of UNHCR and the Women's Refugee Commission, supported by the Youth and Adolescents in Emergencies Advocacy Group (YAE)<sup>1</sup>, the GRYC are supported by a Coordinator, Project Officer and Advisory Committee (consisting of national and international NGOs, youth representatives and an independent youth expert).

Refugee youth are often left out of activities and programmes organised by the UN, NGOs and other organisations. Youth have skills, capabilities, aspirations and needs that often go unrecognised and are not understood. There is a need to reach out and hear from them about the challenges they face, their visions and what support they need to shape positive futures. The consultations are providing opportunities for refugee youth to discuss issues that affect them with host country youth and representatives from the United Nations, international NGOs, national NGOs and other organizations working with youth in the country. The process aims to place youth at the centre of decision making processes that affect them and to recognize their potential. The target group for this project are young refugees that fit the United Nations definition of 'Youth' which is all boys and girls, young women and young men between the ages of 15-24 years.

The consultations are taking place between November 2015 and June 2016. They will include national level consultations in Africa, the Americas, Asia-Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa. The 'National Consultations' are led by national NGOs from each country with UNHCR and an international NGO partner. Similar consultations will also be held with refugee youth in North America, Australasia and Europe. Opportunities to participate in smaller consultations and online are also being provided through a designated toolkit and a Facebook platform. The process will culminate in a global consultation in Geneva in June 2016 and participation by young people in the 2016 annual UNHCR-NGO Consultations, the overarching theme of which is Youth.

## Objectives and design

Underpinning the design of the national consultations are the four core objectives of the GRYC:

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

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<sup>1</sup> The Youth and Adolescents in Emergencies Advocacy Group (YAE Group) includes representatives from more than 15 humanitarian organizations that are committed to achieving better outcomes for young people in humanitarian situations.

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

A participatory approach is being used throughout. The session plans were developed by the GRYC Coordinator, in consultation with UNHCR and WRC. They were designed through a collaborative and iterative process, including:

- An extensive review of literature and other materials relating to consultations with youth, displaced populations and participatory research methods, in order to learn from previous experience and to adapt relevant pre-existing models.<sup>2</sup>
- The active input of a group of young refugees and asylum seekers during a two-day residential workshop in Malta, in October 2015, organised in partnership with UNHCR Malta and a Maltese NGO, Organisation for Friendship and Diversity (OFD). The group consisted of males and females representing the full age range of the global consultations (15-24 year olds), and five countries - Libya, Somalia, Mali, Eritrea and Palestine.
- Input into the development of the session plans and the content of the national consultations was also sought from members of the GRYC Advisory Committee - in person with the Regional Leads representing Africa, Asia Pacific and Latin America during a two-day meeting in Geneva, and by email and skype with the full GRYC Advisory Committee.<sup>3</sup>
- A full pilot national consultation in Uganda that provided an opportunity to learn from the participants and adapt the approach and session plans accordingly.

## Ecuador National Consultation

### National NGO Partner

The Ecuador Consultation was organised at the national level and run by Humor y Vida<sup>4</sup>, in coordination with staff from RET (the Refugee Education Trust), and the UNHCR Ecuador country office. This team was supported by the GRYC team, including the Coordinator, Project Officer, and global representatives from UNHCR and WRC in Geneva and New York.

A team consisting of staff from Humor y Vida, UNHCR Ecuador team and RET, worked together to coordinate the logistics, recruitment of facilitators and interpreters, selection of youth, planning for the stakeholders' meeting, and preparation of materials, as well as engaging in regular Skype meetings with the GRYC team. Multiple staff, including the Director of Humor y Vida, were

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<sup>2</sup> Some examples of key resources accessed include: *Youth Consultations for a Post-2015 Framework: A Toolkit*. Youth in Action (2013); *A Kit of Tools for Participatory Research and Evaluation with Children, Young People and Adults*. Save the Children Norway (2008); *Listen and Learn: Participatory Assessment with Children and Adolescents*. UNHCR (2012); *Community Consultations Using Extended Dialogue Methodology*. UNHCR (2010-11); *Post 2015 Youth Engagement Event Planning Kit*. World Vision (2012); *Considering Consulting? A Guide to Meaningful Consultation with Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds*. The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (2007).

<sup>3</sup> The Advisory Committee Regional Leads include: World Vision (Africa); Save the Children (MENA); RET (Americas) and APRRN (Asia-Pacific).

<sup>4</sup> Humor y Vida uses art to strengthen educational and social processes: <http://corporacionhumoryvida.com/>

committed for the full length of the consultation which helped ensure that all consultation roles were covered and increased staff familiarity with the young people for post-consultation activities.

### **Facilitators**

- The Ecuador national consultation was led by two facilitators, from Humor y Vida and RET, with extensive experience of working with national and refugee youth in Ecuador.
- The lead facilitators were supported by the GRYC Coordinator.
- The lead facilitators and the GRYC Coordinator rotated around the four groups during the small group exercises, to support as required. These small groups formed the basis of many of the activities. This format of small group work was maintained consistently to provide the refugee and national youth participants with meaningful opportunities to participate, discuss and share ideas and experiences.
- 4 small group facilitators from Humor y Vida, RET and UNHCR Ecuador were committed to the process during preparation, delivery and debrief, which this was very important for continuity and to ensure that they had a good understanding of the whole programme, rather than just their specific exercises. Extra support for the small groups was provided by staff from UNHCR Geneva and WRC in New York.

### **Interpreters**

- The primary language of facilitation in Ecuador was Spanish.
- Two pairs of professional interpreters were provided for the GRYC Coordinator and Project Officer, and a full time translator worked to translate the flipcharts, application and evaluation forms, and the small group facilitators' notes.

### **Venue and Accommodation**

The venue for the workshop and the accommodation were on one site in a venue on the outskirts of Quito, well suited to large events. It was a peaceful setting for the consultation with plenty of space indoors and outdoors for work and recreation.

### **Evening social activities**

The Humor y Vida team organised activities each evening, which involved drama, music and physical activity, and enabled the group to relax, have fun and get to know each other better. At the end of day two, the participants were able to leave the venue as a 'party' bus was hired to allow the group to enjoy an evening of music and dance. On the last evening, the participants organised activities for the facilitation team, which included competitions and games.

### **Application and Selection Process**

Information about the Ecuador consultation was shared by UNHCR with their local offices in the provinces of Guayas, Imbabura, Carchi and Santo Domingo, and by Humor y Vida and RET with their offices and contacts in Esmeraldas, Pichincha and Sucumbios provinces. The selection process was based on recommendations from the local offices of each organization. A total of 31 youth applied to participate, this included 22 refugees and asylum seekers, 2 Colombian-Ecuadorian and 7 Ecuadorians, but six of the nominated applicants were unable to participate.

The participants were nominated and approved based on a set of criteria determined by the central GRYC team, in consultation with the GRYC Advisory Committee, which included:

- Age (15-24)
- Willingness and ability to participate in an interactive, participatory 4-day consultation
- Proven experience as participants of an existing youth programme (for refugee youth) or national youth organization (for host country youth)
- Openness to engage on refugee issues
- A statement of motivation which included details about why the applicant was interested in being involved in the consultation, what they could contribute and what they hoped would be the results of the consultation.

Selection guidelines were provided to the Ecuador team to ensure that the participants were as representative of their communities as possible, with particular attention paid to ensuring that the chosen applicants were inclusive of persons with disabilities and represented a diverse range of gender, age, nationality, geographic locations in Ecuador, education and employment background and ability, sexual orientation, marital and parental status, and a range of experiences of youth and community work.

### **Youth Participant Profiles**

24 young people aged between 15 and 24 years participated in the Ecuador consultation. All youth completed a participant application form as part of the application process, from which we obtained their demographic data, which can be summarised as follows:

- 18 refugees/asylum seekers, 2 dual nationals (Colombian-Ecuadorian) and 4 nationals
- 14 male/10 female
- 20 aged eighteen and over/4 aged under eighteen
- The refugee youth all came from Colombia
- There was broad geographical representation, with youth attending from multiple provinces within Ecuador
- Of the refugee youth, 19 identified as living in a 'large town or city'
- 2 of the refugee youth identified as having been away from their home country for more than 10 years, 8 as having been away for 5-10 years, 4 have been away for 2-5 years, 2 for 1-2 years, and the remaining 3 identified as having been away from their home country for 6 months to one year
- In terms of the highest level of education the refugee youth had completed –
  - 1 identified as having completed primary school
  - 14 identified as having completed secondary school
  - 3 identified as having an undergraduate degree
  - 1 chose not to answer this question
- In terms of current education or employment status of the refugee youth, they identified themselves as follows (multiple choice was possible) –
  - 12 in formal education (e.g. school, university, college)
  - 5 employed part-time
  - 3 self-employed

- 4 looking for a job
- 2 as 'other' (looking for the opportunity to study, and running own start-up business)
- 16 of the refugee youth identified themselves as living with family, 3 identified as living alone, and 1 identified as living with their spouse
- 10 of that number identified their father as the head of their household, 4 identified their mother, 4 identified themselves as head of their household, and 1 chose 'other'
- 1 of the refugee youth identified themselves as married
- 1 of the refugee youth identified themselves as a parent, with a child aged 3-4 years
- 5 of the refugee youth identified themselves as caring for a family member on a regular basis, which included younger siblings for two of the youth, a spouse for one youth, and supporting the whole family economically for two youth
- None of the refugee youth identified as having a disability

Participants' motivation for taking part in the national consultation, as outlined in the application forms, include:

- To understand more about our rights and responsibilities as refugees
- To have a space to express our ideas and tell our stories
- To understand the reality of young refugees and young Ecuadorians
- To find solutions to our problems and be a part of the change, e.g. *I'm interested in being an agent of change*" and [I want to] *"contribute towards change"*

Participants' expectations from participating in the consultation, as specified in the application forms, include:

- That our voices are heard and it has an impact, e.g. *"The results I hope to achieve are that our needs as young people are heard and somehow resolved to get a better life for us, the young refugees and Ecuadorians, who live in this host country"*
- To be part of a new and larger network, e.g. *"the networking with the participating organizations and participants"*
- That we have the tools and resources to run similar activities with youth in our own communities, e.g. *"I hope that our opinions will be heard and that we can replicate in our communities whatever we will do on these days"*
- More motivation to keep pushing for change and solutions to our problems

## Group dynamics between youth

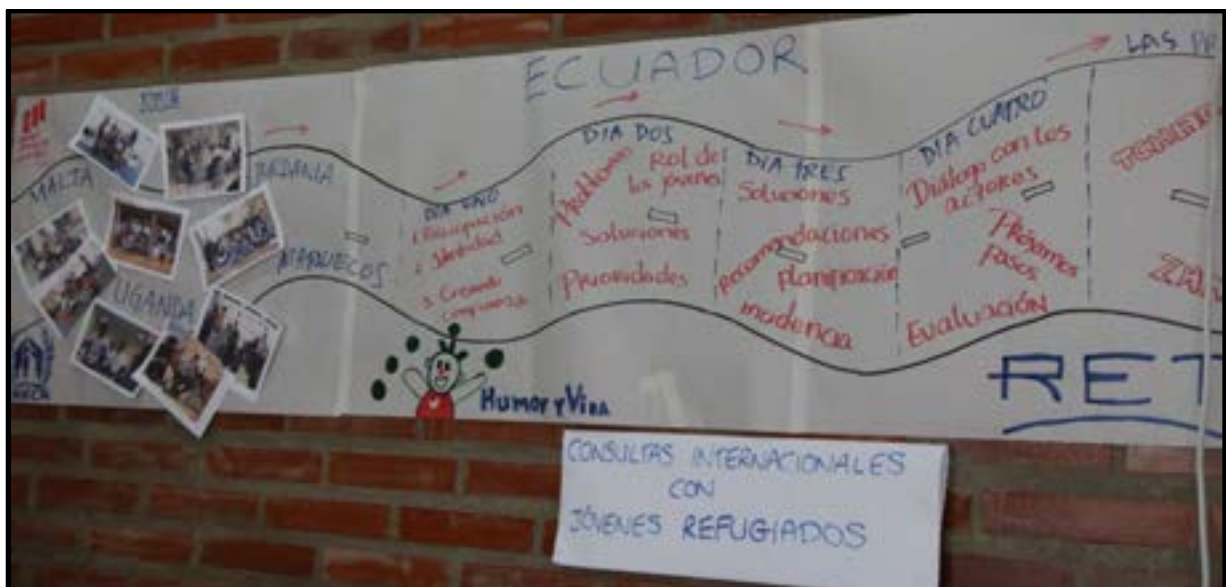
### Bringing together host community and refugee youth

One of the objectives of the national consultations was to provide an opportunity for refugee and host country youth to meet, exchange ideas, build friendships and alliances and establish connections. It was hoped that as a result of the consultations, refugee and host country youth would gain a better understanding of the issues they face – as youth – and that there would be opportunities for refugee youth to work more closely with national youth organisations. The Ecuador group were asked the question on day one, *"Why did we invite refugee and national youth to this*

consultation?” and the answers were as follows: to share cultures, to reduce discrimination “there are many stereotypes but we must learn to accept the other and reduce discrimination”, to understand each other better “to get to know what young Ecuadorians feel when they encounter us within their country” and so “that they understand why we are here”;; to find commonalities “talk about the problems faced by young people today and all the situations that we have to face as young people, both refugees and Ecuadorians”.

## National Consultation Structure

The National Consultations have two components, with the same structure for all locations. The first component is a three-day consultation with 20 refugee youth and 5 host country youth - working together to be heard, develop ideas, build alliances and networks, and contribute to improving work with young refugees globally. The second component is a half-day ‘stakeholder dialogue’ where participants share consultation outcomes and recommendations with key local, national and international agencies and organisations and develop next steps for the post-consultation period.



### Day One

- Getting to know each other, building trust and teambuilding
- Identity
- Youth Participation

### Day Two

- Identifying and prioritising issues
- Analysing issues and identifying causes and impacts
- The role of youth in addressing the issues

### Day Three

- Addressing the issues and developing solutions
- Advocacy/Communicating our messages and recommendations
- Stakeholder analysis
- Planning for the stakeholders meeting

### Day Four

- Stakeholders meeting
- Group action planning – what next for this group



## Main themes from Ecuador Consultation

The following is an overview and analysis of the key themes and issues that emerged during this consultation:

- **Lack of recognized documentation:** This was the most commonly discussed issue in this group, and generated much debate. Most of the other issues raised during the consultation were related to the lack of recognized documentation (e.g. access to health care, employment and education) and the negative impact this has on social inclusion, integration and psychosocial wellbeing.
- **Limited access to employment:** This was attributed both to lack of recognized documentation, but also to discrimination towards both refugee youth and youth more generally. Refugee youth highlighted exploitation as a barrier to employment; while all of the youth raised lack of experience and limited career support as common obstacles to obtaining employment. On several occasions it was noted that tackling the common problem of lack of employment opportunities for both refugee and national youth provided an important opportunity for collaboration.
- **Lack of information about services for new arrivals:** This was a problem highlighted by all the refugee youth. As well as the need for refugees to readily access information upon arrival in Ecuador, it was also noted that host communities should be better informed about the needs, rights and experiences of the newly arrived refugees. The group felt strongly that this two-way flow of information would impact positively on the provision of services and improve integration and inclusion.
- **Lack of or limited access to higher education:** this group particularly focused on higher education, which reflects the educational level of many of the participants (the majority of the refugee youth in the group had completed secondary school). The need for a more flexible education system which takes into account the refugees' educational qualifications in home countries and provides support to bridge the gap, was raised throughout the consultation. The need for affordable education that takes into account the financial challenges that refugees face was also identified. As with many of the employment issues raised by this group, it was also noticeable that many issues with the education system in Ecuador were shared by refugee and national youth. For example, they all argued for the need for a system which recognises the rights of youth to choose where and what they study, and for many Ecuadorian youth in areas far from higher education institutions, the cost and practical challenges of enrolling in universities is also a significant problem.
- **Competition between NGOs working with young people:** Participants felt that competition and lack of coordination between NGOs providing youth services had a negative impact on youth themselves. As one participant said: *"in the Lago area, there are all these services but there is confusion & conflict because different organisations don't communicate with each other."* They raised the need for more joined up thinking and organizations to work together.
- **Greater youth involvement in decision-making, leadership and coordination of services:** this group believed passionately that there should be more spaces for youth to interact and collaborate in the decision making processes that affect them, and more opportunities for youth to be heard and have an influence at national and regional levels. They felt this would ensure

that services targeted at them were more relevant. They proposed including youth in coordination meetings between NGOs, enabling youth to access funding that would normally go to NGOs so that they can lead their own projects and greater efforts to develop meaningful partnerships between youth and key stakeholders.

## Main Findings from Ecuador Consultation

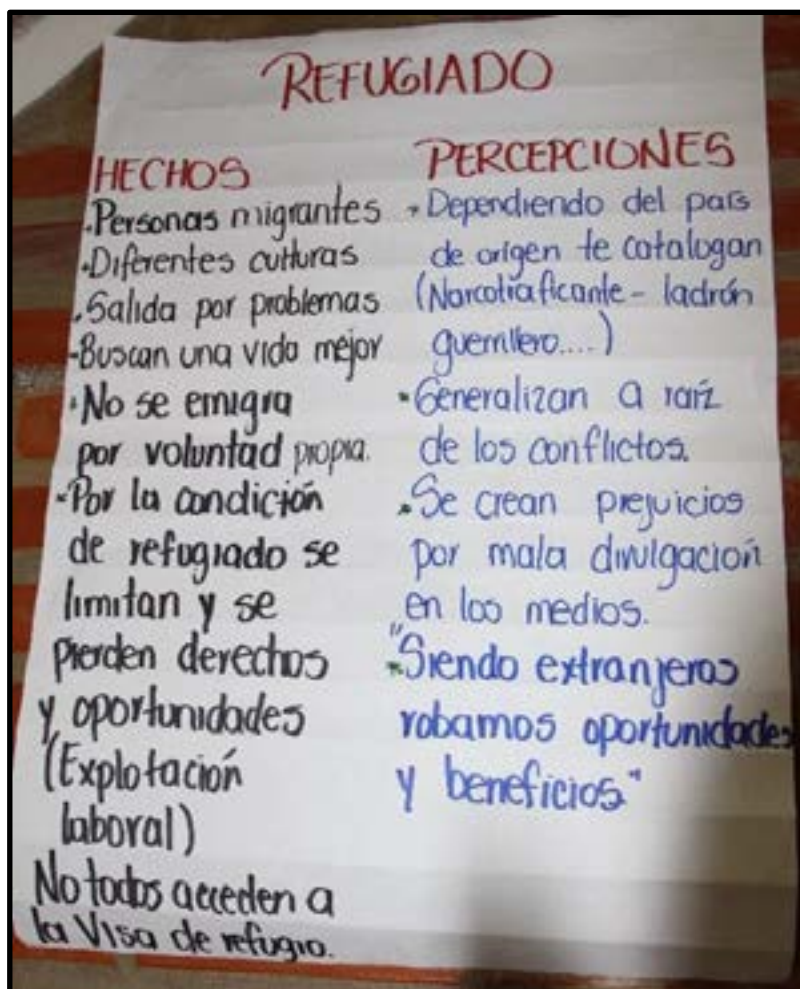
The following section provides a summary of the main points to have arisen in each session during the four-day consultation with refugee youth in Ecuador. The structure of each exercise is described followed by the main findings:

### Perceptions and facts about refugees and youth

This exercise provided an opportunity for the participants to discuss, in small groups, the facts and perceptions associated with the words 'refugee' and 'youth' with their ideas recorded on flipchart paper and shared with the whole group.

A great deal of discussion and debate was generated during this exercise. In all groups, participants discussed that refugees are often labelled as being privileged and seeking to benefit from the Ecuadorian system, for example,

taking jobs and money from Ecuadorians. One participant explained the perception: *"they are refugees because it's convenient for them"*. According to some, the media portrays Colombian refugees as: *"being foreigners, [we] rob locals of opportunities and benefits"*. There were also discussions in all groups about the negative stereotyping around Colombians, for example, one young person explained that Colombian refugees are labelled as - *"narc, robber, terrorist"*. Two groups identified the media as playing a key role in exacerbating these stereotypes about Colombians, referring to *"the Narco-Soap Operas that portray us as prostitutes, hitmen, etc."*. Balanced against these negative perceptions, some participants were keen to highlight that they have had a positive experience, for example one refugee said: *"I was never mistreated, they always treated me well"*. Many participants commented that while there are laws in Ecuador that protect and include refugees, they are regularly not applied. Many participants referred to refugees having no voice as a result: *"If our voices were heard than we would not have to have such consultations"*.



In the discussions about the term 'youth', all the groups identified common negative perceptions about youth - they are lazy, irresponsible, immature, waste time, and do not want to work. While it was acknowledged that some of these perceptions can be true, they also felt that generalisations are problematic as they prevent people from seeing the strengths and potential of youth. For example, many participants perceived themselves as positive, fun-loving, active, enthusiastic, easy going and inclusive and keen to be part of change now and in the future. Two of the groups also highlighted the challenges that youth face including the lack of space and limited opportunities for youth voices to be heard, and the exploitation that they encounter, including in the workplace.

### **Youth Participation**

This exercise was structured around a set of three questions which the young people voted on and then discussed.

#### **Question 1: Should NGOs and UNHCR listen/engage with youth in designing and planning their services and activities for refugee youth?**

All participants considered that it was important for NGOs and UNHCR to listen and engage with youth in designing and planning services and activities for refugee youth. A participant from Ecuador confirmed: *"If it's about youth who can say it better than youth?"*

#### **Question 2: Have you taken any steps to communicate with NGOs and the UN to talk about the issues you face?**

In response to this question, all youth voted yes.



#### **Question 3: Do you feel it is easy to interact with NGOs and UNHCR to talk about what you face?**

Responses to this question were separated with respect to interaction with NGOs and interaction with UNHCR. In terms of interacting with NGOs – 11 youth voted that it was easy, 6 that it was 'rather easy' and 1 that it was difficult. In terms of interacting with UNHCR – 6 youth voted that it was easy, 9 that it was 'rather easy' and 5 that it was difficult.

During the discussion the youth raised issues, such as favouritism and discrimination, and competition between service providers in certain areas that make interaction challenging with both UNHCR and NGOs.

### **Youth Visions for Participation:**

In the next stage of this session, the participants had the opportunity to discuss in small groups their ideas and visions for youth participation and then to present these ideas visually through posters.

Ideas for youth participation included youth-led talks,



documentaries and other opportunities to share their realities, experiences and to give ‘clear and accurate information’; dance and urban or street art to convey messages; creating an organization or group that helps new arrivals to access services; environmental protection activities; and organizing a festival. To make meaningful participation possible, two of the groups discussed the need for capacity building opportunities for youth: *“young people should be educated in order to educate others”* and *“we should train youth to help other youth”*.

### **Identification and prioritization of needs and issues**

During the second day of the consultation, the youth participants worked in small groups to identify and discuss challenges and issues of importance to them.

While this exercise focused primarily on the needs and issues faced by refugee youth, national youth participants were encouraged to participate and use this exercise as an opportunity to ask questions, learn more about the challenges facing their refugee peers and identify commonalities.

The needs and issues identified by youth focused around several broad themes which largely correlated with those raised at previous consultations. These themes included access to housing, health care and employment, social inclusion, discrimination and xenophobia, food security, psychological support needs, documentation, education and access to information.

While all of the issues raised were considered important and many of them generated a lot of discussion and debate, documentation was the theme which dominated discussions in this exercise and throughout the consultation. Participants cited many of the challenges surrounding lack of recognized documentation, including increased risks of deportation, lack of access to services, including health care and education, and barriers to finding employment. As one participant noted:

*“It is problematic to find work due to lack of documentation – same issue with regards to education”,* while another explained: *“With regards to health we face the same barriers; our documentation doesn’t always enable us to access the health care we need”*. Many participants identified a direct link between social inclusion (feeling part of Ecuadorian society) and documentation, as one youth said: *“The card would also help with social inclusion, which comes from having a job, and going to school. We are facing a vicious circle whereby the lack of proper ID prohibits us from studying and working.”* Finally, many participants highlighted how long it takes to secure proper documentation and the frustration this creates, for example - *“Getting proper documentation takes too much time. They don’t accept you; they deny your documentation. You make numerous attempts and it takes forever to get a visa.”*



Another issue to emerge was lack of information for refugees, who on arrival in Ecuador, do not know which services they are entitled to, or how and where to access them. This was particularly highlighted as an issue with regards to health care, as one participant explained: *“there is a lack of information about access to health care; for example, if you are a young pregnant woman and if you don’t know what you need ... you will not have proper access to information about health services upon arrival.”* Another group discussed this information gap more broadly, as one participant noted: *“another need that I see clearly is that we don’t know the help that is available from NGOs”* As in previous consultations, access to education was highlighted as a major challenge facing refugee youth. As well as barriers to accessing education related to lack of documentation, participants also discussed problems related to lack of recognition of studies in their home country and the need for support to help refugee youth catch up on missed years of study. One participant explained: *“we need support to get up to speed in the education system... we need more assistance in getting into university, we have a hard time reaching that next level”*, while another stressed: *“we need to get validation here of our Colombian education”*. Some participants also discussed the need for more flexibility in the higher education system as places are often allocated far away from young people’s homes making it difficult for them to take up the offer. Difficulty accessing higher education due to cost and accessibility was viewed as an issue that affected Ecuadorian youth as well as refugees, as noted by one participant: - *“about access to higher education, it’s also difficult for Ecuadorians”*.

The need for appropriate psychological support was identified by several groups with particular emphasis placed on the re-traumatizing effect of having to tell your story multiple times. As one participant explained: *“that is why whenever I’m asked why I’m in Ecuador I always just say: Because of reasons, motives and circumstances”*, and another emphasized: *“you come here to forget all that”*. One participant explained that post-traumatic stress can have an impact on refugees’ ability to access services: *“when you get here with trauma, you don’t think about or know about UNHCR, NGOs, etc.”*

Two groups discussed the bureaucratic obstacles to accessing micro-entrepreneurship opportunities, which if available would have a positive impact on family income: *“Access to micro entrepreneurship takes too long and there are too many requirements”*, explained one youth; *“there are many micro economic activities that we could do as a family but we require extra support to get started with”* stressed another.

After identifying the main issues and needs facing refugee youth in Ecuador, the participants were asked in small groups to prioritize the top nine issues they faced, through an exercise called Diamond Ranking. This activity is designed to encourage debate and deeper analysis of the issues and to teach participants about the importance of reaching consensus and compromise. Of the top four issues chosen by the participants, three groups chose the issue of access to recognized documentation and the fourth group selected availability of information for refugee youth on arrival in Ecuador.

Other issues that ranked high and provoked the most debate included: limited knowledge of available services, protection needs, and specific issues concerning access to work and education.

#### **Identifying causes and impacts of issues using Problem Trees:**

Using the ‘problem tree’ tool, participants selected an issue from the top three in their diamond ranking charts and considered its causes and impacts.

One group focused on the lack of government recognition for refugee identification documents; the second group on the desire of young refugees to choose their own higher education subjects and not be offered university placements far from home; the third group focused on lack of available information from NGOs for young refugees on arrival in Ecuador; and the last group selected lack of employment opportunities.



Amongst the causes of the **lack of government recognition for refugee identification documents**, the participants identified: the refugee ID is not in line with the Civil Registry database, which holds the identification information for all the Ecuadorian population and therefore refugees are blocked from accessing key services; lack of political will to resolve the issue; lack of knowledge about the refugee ID and the rights that it entails, for example, employers often do not know if they can hire someone legally with that ID. The impacts of the lack of government recognition for refugee identification documents include: limited access to employment and public services such as telecommunications, banking, electricity, housing, loans, tax ID; frustration and despair because nothing is changing; and exposure to exploitation and corruption.

The group discussing **access to higher education and the desire of refugee and national youth to choose their subjects and study closer to home** identified the following causes: the limited number of public universities, particularly in the provinces of Sucumbíos, Carchi, Imbabura, and Esmeraldas; the lack of university places allocated to refugees and internationals; the lack of recognition for studies undertaken in the country or origin; lack of information about preparatory courses for college admission tests making it harder for refugees to pass the tests; automatic enrolment for higher education in the last year of school without consultation and with no choice of subject. Impacts on refugee and national youth included frustration at having no choice about career path, as one youth explained: *“when you are imposed a career you become a mediocre professional”*; and being unable to progress beyond secondary education due to a university placements being allocated too far from home, making it unaffordable and impractical for many young people to study.

The group discussing **lack of available information for young people on arrival in Ecuador**, identified some of the key causes as being: a lack of political will to provide this information, and a failure by the media to share this information. They highlighted discrimination, and a lack of established information points. They also identified internal challenges within the refugee community which exacerbate the issue including an unwillingness among refugees to share information and competition for scarce resources. As well as refugees feeling a lack of trust in people and institutions due to the effects of the traumatic events they have experienced at home. As a result, it can take time for them to feel ready to request information and/or support. This group felt that the impacts of this issue were serious and far-reaching: *“an ignorance of laws and policies can result in exploitation in the labour market, a feeling of being unprotected, and no support or guidance with the asylum process. A lack of knowledge of available services and how to access them can result in poor health, isolation, hunger, mental health issues, vulnerability to human trafficking and sexual exploitation, lack of access to education, lack of motivation and despair”*.

The final group focused on **lack of employment opportunities** and identified a range of causes which included: discrimination, for example based on nationality and ethnicity, gender, sexuality and disability; lack of experience and inadequate career orientation; lack of access to education; no documentation; and lack of public policy for youth employment. They highlighted many impacts including school drop-out and delinquency due to limited prospects; inability to lead a dignified life, suicide, substance abuse, exclusion and emotional problems; resorting to exploitative and/or harmful work such as prostitution and debt.

## Identifying Solutions using Storyboards

A follow on exercise on day three focused on how to tackle the root causes of these issues, finding solutions, identifying the role of youth and other stakeholders in realising that solution, and identifying the impact of solutions on the lives of refugee youth.

The group focusing on the **lack of government recognition for refugee identification documents**, proposed lobbying and awareness raising as a solution. They suggested holding a public consultation and a refugee signature drive to ask for space to be heard in the National Assembly<sup>5</sup>; using the media to sensitize the host population about refugee identity documents; talking to the directors of public and private companies to influence their internal policies; and engaging NGOs in awareness raising



about refugee rights. The participants felt that young people could organize groups in each province to collect signatures for the petition; promote the campaign using radio, television and public spaces; and create an artistic piece to display their demands, for example a large canvas with finger prints or signatures. They indicated that they would need to engage the support of external actors, such as UNHCR and NGOs to provide legal support and contacts, the media to help increase exposure, the National Assembly to pass legal reform, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide experts, private companies to help with funding and other donors and sponsors to support with office supplies. In terms of the impact this solution would have on the lives of refugee youth, the group concluded that this would result in improved access to basic services, such as banking, education, telecommunications, housing and employment, end violations of their rights, lead to greater social inclusion and equality and improve their quality of life.

The second group discussing **access to higher education and the desire of young refugees and national youth to choose their subjects and study closer to home** proposed several solutions. To address problems of financial constraints and limited recognition of studies elsewhere, the youth suggested increasing student loans for non-nationals, lobbying the government to validate studies in refugees' country of origin, and supporting refugee youth to bridge the gap in their education to be

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<sup>5</sup> The National Assembly is the legislative branch of the government of Ecuador, with the power to pass laws.



able to meet the requirements of the Ecuadorian system<sup>6</sup>. To address the issue of limited availability of university places, the group proposed increasing the number of universities in the provinces<sup>7</sup>, which would also make it possible for youth living in those areas to study close to home. They also proposed increasing the university registration quota for foreigners and persuading the government to take into account the Immigration Census when setting the university registration quota<sup>8</sup>. In terms of increasing the choice of degree subjects available, the group proposed having more technical degrees evaluated by the National Secretariat of Higher Education (SENESCYT) and increasing access to technical degrees in the provinces so they are not just available in the cities.

The group also proposed setting up a youth association comprised of refugees, other non-nationals and nationals, in partnership with NGOs, to campaign on higher education. To secure the support of NGOs in this process, they requested the assistance of RET and UNHCR to prepare a project proposal. They also suggested that the Ministry of Education, UNHCR, Educational Districts and NGOs working in education could carry out a survey on what technical degrees young people want. Finally, they proposed a partnership with the National University Students Association to promote this campaign. The young people in this group felt that these solutions would result in more young professionals and accomplished youth, and improved relationships between refugee and national youth by addressing a shared issue together.

Several solutions were considered by the group addressing the **lack of available information for young people on arrival in Ecuador**. This group proposed that NGOs take a more active and coordinated role in providing support and information, along with the relevant public institutions. They proposed the creation of discussion groups and networks to provide a point of contact and support for new arrivals, as well as using public theatre to raise awareness of available services and support. They proposed a partnership approach with a range of stakeholders, for example suggesting that volunteer groups, the National Communication Secretariat, TV networks, radio stations, newspapers, and NGOs could develop creative programs that could be shared through the media showing refugees' realities and NGO's contact information. They proposed regular cultural exchanges and anti-discrimination campaigns, led by voluntary groups and NGOs, and envisaged the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Education, and Social Inclusion working together with NGOs to sensitize the host population about the situation of refugees. They proposed that the Migration Office and Police could install signs with NGO's phone numbers and addresses at points of entry into the country and at various locations in the cities, which would also include information for Ecuadorians. The group identified one of the impacts of these solutions to be increased mutual understanding between refugee youth and the host population.

The fourth group focusing on the **lack of employment opportunities** available for refugee youth, identified a range of solutions. First, the group proposed strengthening employers' and public official's knowledge of refugee rights. Second, they proposed increasing the capacity of the job banks that are run by the public sector in Ecuador, to ensure that they do proper follow up and

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<sup>6</sup> In Ecuador, all young people have to take an examination and attain a certain grade to qualify for a place at University, which can be extremely challenging if your previous educational experience was in another country.

<sup>7</sup> A 'province' in Ecuador is typically a location outside of the three main cities.

<sup>8</sup> The last immigration census in Ecuador took place in 2013, so the statistics collected at that time are now out of date. Universities have set a quota for the number of refugees they will accept, so as the number of refugees increases, so too does the demand for those places.

provide the ongoing support needed by young refugees as they seek to enter the job market in Ecuador<sup>9</sup>. Third, the group saw the need to improve the integration of Colombian refugees into Ecuadorian society to increase acceptance of refugees and therefore increase the opportunities available to refugee youth.

This group identified many roles for young people in realizing these solutions, including raising awareness of discrimination in the workplace and recruitment processes through organizing workshops in schools and in the community, and talking directly with public officials to increase their knowledge of these challenges. They also proposed organizing a 'signature drive' to demonstrate the strength of feeling around this issue, and lobbying for increased respect of refugees' labour rights. The young people in this group suggested organizing discussions and debates with other young people to create a "manifesto" to present to the authorities. To foster inclusion, the youth suggested establishing a youth group with migrants and the host population, and forming alliances with young people to generate dialogue with the authorities. The group also argued that current micro-entrepreneurial efforts and savings cooperatives should be expanded. They recognized that a partnership approach would be crucial in realizing these solutions and proposed, for example, cooperating with NGOs to provide references and signpost opportunities for job hunters. They also identified key roles for UNHCR, the National Assembly, NGOs and universities, the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of the Interior and the police, Chamber of Commerce, employers and civil society, in terms awareness raising and integrating refugees into Ecuadorian society.

This group concluded the impacts on the lives of refugee youth would be tremendous if these solutions were implemented and would include improved safety and better access to employment, decreased discrimination and exploitation, increased independence, integration, and decreased poverty and violence.

#### **Finding more solutions to priority issues:**

The World Café exercise was used to encourage youth to identify creative solutions to the problems they face. Four issues were selected from the diamond ranking exercise, which although not ranked in the top three, were the focus of much discussion and debate. These included:

1. Lack of opportunities and spaces for recreation and free time activities for youth
2. There is competition among NGOs to help young people instead of cooperation
3. Discrimination and xenophobia
4. Re-victimization and the need for psychological support

After identifying solutions, youth were then asked to consider what role they could take in making these solutions a reality.

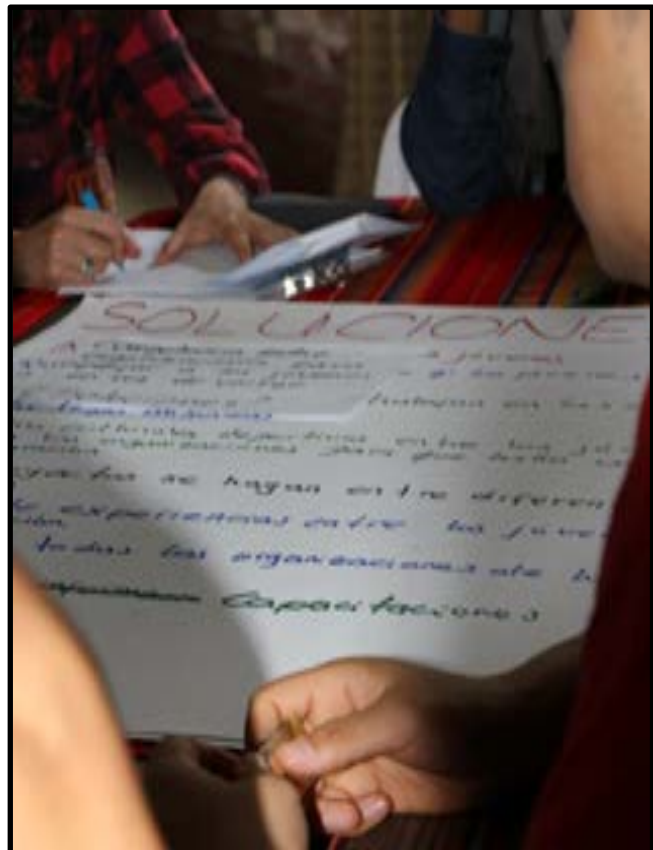
Youth participants identified a range of ways to tackle the **lack of opportunities and spaces for recreation and free time activities for youth**. These included linking up NGOs who work with youth and creating a national youth network, the members of which could meet regularly. They also felt

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<sup>9</sup> These job banks were set up in several Ecuadorian cities to connect employers with employees, and are mainly focused on Ecuadorians. According to the participants, these banks have not been a success, and Colombian refugee youth explained that they have experienced discrimination when they have tried to interact with them, for example, as a result of their refugee ID not being accepted.

that current youth groups could be improved and expanded, for example, to include training opportunities and not just leisure activities, to promote intercultural spaces with an emphasis on integration, and to include peer education opportunities with an emphasis on sustainability. Many participants encouraged a wider range of activities, including culture, art, sport, education, and greater access to public spaces. The participants suggested that they could help to mobilise youth to be more actively involved in their communities and to lobby the authorities to gain more access to public spaces, plus they could organise cultural gatherings and sports activities.

Solutions to problem of **competition between NGOs working with young people** focused on several areas. Firstly, the creation of joint events with NGOs working together with youth, such as sporting and cultural events, employment support networks, and training opportunities. They proposed that NGOs should coordinate better with each other to avoid conflicting events and involve youth in the planning stages, so that their activities reflect what youth want and need rather than telling youth what to do. The group also felt that it would help if there was a central hub of information for youth on what each organisation offers. Finally, there was a request for NGOs to recognise the independence of youth, and to avoid labelling them as 'belonging' to a specific NGO – *"we are young people; we don't belong to any NGO"* one young person expressed. To support these solutions the participants



proposed that they could develop a census of their needs for NGOs, form a youth network to better influence the activities that NGOs offer, apply for funding for youth to run their own activities, rather than the money going to NGOs; lobby for an NGO network to improve coordination and for youth to be part of this network from the beginning and not only when it suits the NGOs.

To address the issue of **discrimination and xenophobia**, the participants suggested a range of solutions, with a strong focus on awareness raising and community sensitization. For example, messaging concerning anti-discrimination, the realities of refugees and human rights should be shared through the media, in schools and amongst public officials. They also suggested more activities that promote integration such as sports, games and drama involving Colombians and Ecuadorians and the creation of youth clubs, and they highlighted that refugees need to take responsibility for learning about their new home, and taking more of an interest in Ecuadorian culture. At a national level, it was proposed that there should be laws introduced to tackle discrimination. To make these solutions possible, the participants considered the role youth could play in lobbying the media and the authorities for space on television and radio shows, and lobbying the Ministry of Education for access to schools to run workshops around peace and acceptance (with

the support of NGOs and UNHCR). They identified social media as a key mechanism to create awareness and to promote integration and tolerance, for example, young refugees could partner with NGOs or UNHCR to share their stories and experiences through blogs or other social media networks.

On the topic of **re-victimization and the need for psychological support** participants strongly encouraged improved coordination between NGOs to prevent youth having to tell the same story many times. In terms of psychological support, the group had many suggestions to ensure that the support they receive is of a high quality, relevant, and does not cause further harm. They highlighted the need for well trained, approachable staff who are able to empathize and see each person as an individual; group and individual support dependent on the young person's preference; consistent psychological treatment/support (rather than having to see a different psychologist at each appointment) and greater choice in choosing a different psychologist; and adequate follow up to ensure that the service is meeting the needs of the young person. The youth also raised the need for NGO staff to be well-trained, supportive, non-judgmental and transparent. The youth participants considered they had a role in lobbying for more appropriate services, raising awareness of the importance of psychosocial/psychological support, and linking up young people to support each other.



## Recommendations, Solutions and Core Actions

### Youth Recommendations

During the 4-day consultation, youth were encouraged in their breaks and through formal activities to consider what recommendations they would make to a global audience that would improve the lives of young refugees. A graffiti style wall provided the informal space to record their ideas at any point during each day, and a structured activity on the third day helped the youth to review their work during the consultation and to consider new ideas that they might have, or to hone the ideas

that they had already shared. The group then shared their ideas and using sticky dots, voted for their top five choices.

This activity resulted in the following recommendations or core actions from the Ecuador youth participants, which have been categorised for ease of reference but which remain in the words of youth:

### **Youth Participation**

- Having young leaders head NGOs and UNHCR's refugee projects
- Establishing a global Network / global refugee blog for refugees to share their experiences
- A funding focus towards youth/ more funds for youth projects
- Establishing or strengthening youth networks at a national, international and global level
- Donors should fund groups of NGOs, so that they don't compete for the same youth participants
- Having a youth-refugee representative at a decision making level
- Promoting media space for young refugees
- More consultations, supported by all the NGOs working in the area
- Youth organizing through a smaller organization/institution
- Connecting with youth in similar situations through social media

### **Employment**

- Entrepreneurship support to facilitate youth labour inclusion
- Creating first employment opportunities for young people

### **Education**

- Universities should increase their registration quota for foreigners
- Running a study on refugees' access to education: problems and solutions

### **Equality and Rights**

- Respect for equal rights
- Not forgetting about the far away or rural regions in a country
- Law abiding and enforcing
- Access to services and rights through the proper recognition of the refugee ID
- Sensitizing host countries on refugee issues and refugees' rights
- Sensitizing refugee officials, so that they actually care about the welcoming process
- Creating awareness about the suffering and hardship faced by refugees
- Respect for diversity and multiculturalism, "through bonding"
- Sending unaccompanied youth to host families

### **Peace**

- Strengthening peace processes around the world
- Securing peace in Colombia so return is possible
- An end to wars

## Stakeholders Dialogue

The Stakeholders Dialogue component of the consultation took place on the morning of the fourth day. The meeting was attended by 40 stakeholders from 31 organisations, including:

### State

- SETEP (Technical Secretary for Poverty Eradication)
- German Embassy
- MSP (Ministry of Public Health)
- DPE (Ombudsman Office of Ecuador)
- MIES (Ministry of Social and Economic Inclusion)
- MCDS (Ministry Coordinator of Social Development)
- Judicial Council
- Public Prosecutor Office
- MJDHC (Ministry of Justice, Rights, People and Culture)
- SENPLADES (National Secretariat for Planning and Development)
- MREMH (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility)
- MINEDUC (Ministry of Education)
- CNII (National Council for Intergenerational Equality)

### International Cooperation

- VVOB (The Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance)
- Brazilian Embassy
- Jesuit Refugee Service
- HIAS
- RET International
- UNASUR (Union of South American Nations)
- CRS (Catholic Relief Services)
- OEI (Organisation of Ibero-American States)
- FUDELA

### UN Agencies

- UNV
- UNICEF
- UNHCR
- IOM
- Fundación de las Américas

### Stakeholder dialogue structure

The dialogue ran from 10am-1pm. Four youth participants opened the meeting with a welcome speech outlining the purpose of the consultation and provided an explanation of the previous three days, using the flipcharts and images that had been produced to explain the activities.

### **Group presentations**

On day three of the consultation, the youth created group presentations to showcase the issues they had been focusing on and explain both the actions they could take to bring about solutions and their recommendations for stakeholders to support and supplement these actions. They rehearsed their presentations during the previous evening and on the morning of the meeting before presenting to the stakeholders. With the participation of all team members, each presentation lasted for about 5 minutes and included drama, music, and formal presentations. The topics selected included recognition of documents, access to information upon arrival, access to employment, and lack of access to universities.

### **Round table discussions**

After the presentations, the participants had the opportunity to engage in more focused conversations during small round table discussions which involved participants rotating from one table to another (World Café style). The purpose was to create a space that was more conducive to discussions and building relationships by reducing



the feeling of ‘them’ and ‘us’. Discussion suggestions were placed on each table and then groups were divided to ensure that there was a roughly equal number of youth and stakeholders at each table, along with a facilitator to support the discussion if required.

### **Recommendations and Open Discussion**

Space was then provided for an ‘open mic’ session, allowing anyone in the room to speak in response to what they had heard or discussed during the morning. Stakeholders and youth were free to speak, and the focus was on concrete suggestions and actions to ensure sustainable outcomes from the meeting. In conclusion, two youth participants summarized the group’s key recommendations for the stakeholders.

### **Review of the dialogue**

- The format was the same as in the previous consultations, and it continued to work well, as it provided the participants with the opportunities they wanted to present their ideas and to have more focused discussions with stakeholders.
- After rehearsals and room set up, participants were encouraged to mix with the stakeholders as they arrived to build their confidence and to make contacts. Two young people took responsibility for the sign in sheets, managing the flow of guests arriving and

handing out a one-page overview of the GRYC to all stakeholders to increase their understanding of the wider project.

- During the 'World Café' small group discussions, multiple topics were discussed and many of the youth took the opportunity to express themselves and to ask direct, and often challenging questions of the stakeholders. The main topics discussed included documentation, access to education, spaces for youth to interact with the government, access to employment, internships and training, dissemination of information upon arrival in Ecuador, youth leadership, mental health and psychological support, refugee rights, and discrimination and xenophobia. Many commitments were made during these discussions and the stakeholders were encouraged to share their commitments and proposals with the whole group in the following 'open mic' section.
- The open discussion section ('open mic') involved active engagement between youth and stakeholders, and was chaired by two young people. A facilitator wrote up the action points on flipchart paper during the discussion.

## Key Discussion Points and Outcomes

### Open Discussion ('Open Mic')

- There was a consensus on the need for a network that would bring together the youth and the stakeholders and build on the momentum created. For example, one stakeholder proposed monthly meetings to track progress after the consultation and utilising social media to share ideas. Another agreed and highlighted the importance of involving youth in proposal development to promote youth inclusion and in advocacy to amplify youth voices. Two other stakeholders from small NGOs in Ecuador emphasised the need to unite and work together to be able to provide better services for youth. The representative from another Ecuadorian NGO also encouraged the organisations present to consider where services overlap in order to improve what is offered and they expressed a desire to start working with refugee youth and to provide advocacy support for the group.
- This idea of involving young people in advocacy efforts was mentioned on several occasions, and in terms of high level advocacy, one stakeholder agreed to assist members of the group to voice their issues in the National Assembly.
- Several stakeholders confirmed that they would be sharing what they had learned through the meeting with their organisations, including the government ministries, regional organisations and international NGOs. On the theme of education specifically, one stakeholder from an international development organisation committed to sharing the outcomes of this consultation with their network of teachers.



- Finally, for several stakeholders, they expressed that this meeting provided a unique opportunity to meet with and hear from youth directly and to think outside of the 'adult-centric' box that so many organisations work in.



## Next Steps/Future Action

The in-country partners - Humor y Vida, RET and UNHCR Ecuador - have committed to sustain the momentum created by the consultation, and to follow up directly with the stakeholders. They will also be managing the process of selecting youth representatives for the global youth consultation which will be held in Geneva in June 2016. Examples of ideas for action discussed since the consultation include: sharing the outcomes within the partner organisations to improve their activities with/responses for youth; supporting the participants to develop and realise the project designs that they began during the consultation; building partnerships with other organizations, public and private institutions; and utilising art and theatre to bring together young refugees and young Ecuadorians as a tool for advocacy and communication with the local community.

During the final debrief meeting with youth on day four and in their final written evaluation forms, many of the participants expressed an interest in future engagement, including: utilising social media to coordinate future action; engaging with local radio stations in four provinces initially to share the outcomes of the consultation, and to raise awareness around the key issues that have been raised; following up with specific stakeholders who made commitments during the meeting; creating a youth network, with representation from the provinces; organising another youth consultation involving more refugee and national youth; and reviewing all notes and flipcharts from the consultation to contribute to the development of project proposals.

## Evaluations

### Daily Youth Evaluation

A different evaluation tool was used at the end of each day to capture ideas, learning and recommendations from the participants. Aside from collecting feedback, we also wanted to be sure that the youth were recognised as active participants in the consultation process, with the power to directly influence it. Targeted questions and interactive exercises facilitated the collection of feedback on what they liked, didn't like, what they had learned and new skills they had acquired and what they would recommend to the facilitators for the next day or for future consultations. Some examples of participant feedback mechanisms used include:

At the end of day one, participants were asked to express what they enjoyed, what they did not enjoy, and what they would recommend for the next day by sharing comments anonymously on a prepared flipchart sheet. The results showed that the majority of participants had enjoyed the day in terms of the activities, the facilitators, the topics, the interactions and group dynamics and the participatory approach. The negative comments focused on the time pressure to complete each exercise, too many voices competing with each other during group discussions. Meanwhile the constructive recommendations included requests for better time management, enforcement of the ground rules and respect when one person is speaking, more time to debate the big issues, and more chance for artistic activities.

At the end of day two, participants were asked to share their answers verbally to two questions: 1) One word to describe the day, and 2) One thing they learnt today? Everyone in the group answered the questions in turn around the circle. Some examples of the responses include:

One word to sum up Day Two	What I learned today
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very productive</li> <li>• Fun</li> <li>• Interactive</li> <li>• Great participation</li> <li>• Consciousness</li> <li>• Very interesting</li> <li>• Very good</li> <li>• Great</li> <li>• Empowerment</li> <li>• Interesting</li> <li>• Enriching</li> <li>• Cooperation</li> <li>• Commitment</li> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Creativity</li> <li>• Excellence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>It's important that we can share ideas and learn from each other</i></li> <li>• <i>We all have our own versions and opinions</i></li> <li>• <i>Being empathic on everyone else's experiences</i></li> <li>• <i>Let's actually create a network</i></li> <li>• <i>We learned a lot, we all have qualities that we can use in the future to get integrated</i></li> <li>• <i>There are things within our reach</i></li> <li>• <i>I learn every day. The importance to communicate and listen to each other.</i></li> <li>• <i>We are a lot of young people with a single voice</i></li> <li>• <i>We have learned to give priority to the important things</i></li> <li>• <i>We can give our opinions to get things actually done</i></li> <li>• <i>We are all different but we are in similar situations,</i></li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Really cool day</li> <li>• Warrior</li> <li>• Unity</li> <li>• Progress</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Learning</li> <li>• Motivation</li> <li>• WOW</li> </ul>	<p><i>I've learned from everyone.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We have a great way to find solutions, even if they are crazy ideas; we get work with them and adapt them</i></li> <li>• <i>We are all fighting and giving it our best/ we've been through so much and we have no fear to share our stories.</i></li> <li>• <i>We all got together and somehow crazy and great things get produced.</i></li> <li>• <i>We have learned that our communication is up to us, and is based on our abilities and talents. We have learned that we are the present and the future.</i></li> </ul>
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### Final Participant Evaluation

At the end of day four, participants had the opportunity to share their opinions of the consultation, what they had learned and their suggestions and recommendations for future consultations through a written evaluation form. This was an important tool for participants to provide anonymous, individual feedback at the end of the consultation. Forms were translated and completed in Spanish to ensure that youth felt comfortable and confident to express themselves. The forms were translated into English after the event.

The written evaluation forms also provide targeted feedback on how well the participants felt they had contributed to the core GRYC objectives and outcomes. Participants were given the intended GRYC outcomes and asked to comment accordingly: completely agree; mostly agree; partially agree; do not agree. They were also given space to comment on each outcome. The results from the 24 completed forms were as follows:

**Outcome 1:** Through my participation in this consultation, I had the opportunity to identify and discuss issues that are important to me and my community, and to develop and suggest solutions.

- Completely agree - 19 participants
- Mostly agree - 2 participants
- Partially agree – 1 participant
- Do not agree – 2 participants<sup>10</sup>

*“It has been a feedback process that opened up my eyes and mind so that I can see beyond many of the problems faced by young people and in this way I have clear ideas that I can share with my youth group back home”*

*“All the issues we discussed were important for me and my community, and with the solutions that we came up with it’s clear to me that we must all act. Big applause!”*

<sup>10</sup> No comments clearly explained this, although one participant commented that they sometimes felt that particular voices dominated the discussions.

*“Aside from allowing us to identify important issues, this consultation gave us the chance to come together and learn that we all have the same difficulties but that it’s up to us to be part of changing them”*

**Outcome 2:** Through my participation in this consultation, I have developed and improved my leadership and advocacy skills

- Completely agree – 19 participants
- Mostly agree – 2 participants
- Do not agree – 1 participant<sup>11</sup>

*“I have well-supported criteria and good ideas, sometimes it’s hard for me to share them clearly and concisely. But really in this workshop I’ve learned that I’m capable of defending what I think”*

*“Through this hard process, I’ve realized that my leadership skills have been truly strengthened, due to the interaction and opinion exchange that allow me to get empowered with the message I want to communicate”*

*“Each day within this process, enriched me in an incredible way. I knew I had leadership skills but here I became aware of what it means to be a good leader”*

*“I was able to improve how I express myself... and I learned to listen to others’ proposals, respect the way they think and defend what I think”*

**Outcome 3:** Through my participation in this consultation, I am more aware of organisations that I can engage with at a local and national level

- Completely agree – 18 participants
- Mostly agree – 3 participants
- Do not agree – 1 participant<sup>12</sup>

*“It opened up the doors to integrate us to a direct contact with youth collectives, NGOs and the national government. With which I can develop proposals on youth issues such as a culture of peace, education, active production, health, free time productive activities, which are our needs”*

*“Yes, because I’ve been able to discover the different roles played by NGOs and their interests on the problems, causes, and solutions”*

*“I actually learned about new organizations that I didn’t know about and that are important”*

**Outcome 4:** Through my participation in this consultation, I have more opportunities to develop relationships with youth groups and organisations locally, nationally and globally.

- Completely agree – 17 participants
- Mostly agree – 4 participants
- Partially agree - 1 participant
- Do not agree - 1 participant<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> None of the comments explained the reason for this, although one of the comments highlighted that there was limited time to explore the new skills.

<sup>12</sup> No comment to explain this ranking.

*“Very much agree since we are all from different NGOs and institutions and we have created bonds and we can promote in our communities the things we have discussed among all of us”*

*“Locally we don’t have many organizations working with youths, although now I know that on a national level there are many willing to help”*

*“Yes, since we have committed ourselves to starting a network to give continuity to this issues”*

*“Yes I agree because I met new youth groups on a provincial and national level, to increase my integration knowledge with new groups”*

**Outcome 5:** Through my participation in this consultation, I understand more about the experiences of other refugee youth and national youth.

- Completely agree - 19 participants
- Mostly agree – 3 participants
- Partially agree - 1 participant
- Do not agree - 1 participant<sup>14</sup>

*“I found very different stories that shocked me, and I can share these stories in my community and in my host community... I also found friends who know many things and who inspire me to keep learning more and more”*

*“We don’t have the same circumstances and in this space I was able to learn that there are many who do share my stories and others who suffer different problems”*

*“It was a space that allowed me to listen to the other participants, learning their experiences and problems; clearly understanding youth’s reality”*

The other questions in the written evaluation concentrated on a more in depth review of the consultation process and outcomes for youth, and requested recommendations for future consultations and ideas for individual or group action after the event. Some of the comments from participants are captured below:

Do you feel that you have been listened to at this consultation? Please explain your answer:

*“Yes, I felt heard by everyone, taken into account and that is how I got to care for everyone as well”*

*“Yes, in my group I shared my opinions, and even though they weren’t all accepted we got to know each other through dialogue. I was also able to express myself along with my friends in front of authorities”*

What specific ideas do you have for action based on your involvement in this consultation?

*“Sharing everything I learned with the youth group I’m a part of, also taking this information to the radio with the help of the NGO I work with”*

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<sup>13</sup> No comment to explain this ranking.

<sup>14</sup> Not clearly explained in the comments, but one did refer to feeling that the consultation did not explore the issues deeply enough.

*“Advocate in the media and get the higher education institutions to hold a national poll to show the percentage of refugees who can’t access higher education”*

What suggestions do you have for future National Consultations?

*“I only suggest that you keep up the consultations, in order to learn of the needs of refugee populations and youth around the world”*

*“Time: getting funded to have a training camp... giving us a 15-day recess and then coming back so that we can clarify our proposals and write letters, projects, etc. for improvement”*

Did this consultation meet your expectations? Please explain your answer:

*“Basically yes, I imagined youth participation, problem discussion and looking for solutions, which is basically what happened in this consultation... I hope you keep having them!”*

*“It exceeded them. Because it was our work, our ideas, our dreams, which got heard, understood and supported by all of you”*

What learning are you taking away from this consultation?

*“We the young people have power over the present and the future. WE HAVE A VOICE AND A VOTE”*

*“That we as young people don’t need to depend on organizations and that we can promote our ideas to society ourselves”*

## Lessons Learned

The lessons learned from each national consultation inevitably inform the next consultations. Below is a summary of the main strengths and challenges encountered in Ecuador:

### Challenges

In terms of representation, although the group had a good balance of male/female, participants from multiple provinces, several young carers/parents and the majority had experience of youth and community work there were unfortunately no participants who identified as disabled or as LGBTIQ. From a practical perspective, although two days of preparatory meetings took place before the consultation, some of the small group facilitators reflected during a debrief session that they needed more preparation time to develop their facilitation skills. This is certainly not a new challenge for the consultations, given the limited time available to spend in each country prior to the national consultation, but solutions will be considered for future consultations in order to better support less experienced facilitators working with the team. Skills in conflict resolution were needed for this consultation, as a number of participants struggled to resolve their differences which at times impacted negatively on the rest of the group.

### Strengths

By translating the session plans into Spanish and sharing them with the facilitation team before the consultation, the partners were able to familiarise themselves with the materials prior to the GRYC team's arrival. The format was well received, and the lead facilitators agreed that it was logical and easy to follow, albeit with a tight timeframe in which to deliver. The Ecuador team had also gone to great effort to ensure consistent GRYC branding on all consultation materials, including note books, folders and banners which was appreciated by the team, the youth and the stakeholders. From a personnel perspective, the quality of note taking was greatly enhanced by the presence of a full time interpretation and translation team who ensured that the lead note taker had a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the activities and outcomes in real time. This team also supported the GRYC Coordinator and as a result improved the level of support available for the facilitation team.

Meanwhile the venue provided dedicated indoor and outdoor space for the workshop activities, and access to recreational space (football and volleyball area, and swimming pool) created a comfortable and adaptable environment for the consultation. At this consultation, youth were involved in capturing video and photos which worked well to increase youth participation and to document aspects of the consultation from a youth perspective. Finally, the stakeholders meeting was very well attended by a wide range of agencies and organisations, which reflects the effort that went into disseminating information about the event, and following up on the invitations.

## Conclusion

The Ecuador consultation brought together a passionate and committed group of youth, who demonstrated strong empathy for each other's experiences, both as refugees and national youth, as well as expressing a keen interest in the situation of refugees in other parts of the world. The work of the participants over the four-day consultation laid some strong foundations developing ideas and projects to address the issues of most significant concern and their continued hard work will be crucial to ensuring that these ideas are lifted off the many sheets of flipchart paper that were produced. The importance of a partnership approach to address the complex issues faced by refugee youth is crucial to the GRYC as a whole and was certainly a central feature of the Ecuador consultation. Many new relationships were developed with key individuals and organisations through the stakeholders meeting and there is great potential for positive and lasting change for young refugees in Ecuador.