



# GYAC 2020

**Strengthening Refugee and Internally  
Displaced Youth Leadership &  
Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic**



# Acknowledgements

The work of the Global Youth Advisory Council would not be possible without the generous assistance from the following donors and supporters: Global Affairs Canada, The Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United States Government, Open Society Foundation, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Women's Refugee Commission, Governments, NGOs, refugee communities, and many others. We acknowledge, with much appreciation, the role you have played and the crucial support you provided to enable the Global Youth Advisory Council to realize the achievements shared in this Annual Report for 2020. **Thank you.**

Canada



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

**WOMEN'S  
REFUGEE  
COMMISSION**  
RESEARCH. RETHINK. RESOLVE.

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>Who Are the GYAC Members?</b>	3
<b>A Note from the Co-Chairs</b>	5
<b>GYAC Members' Impact in Response to COVID-19</b>	7
<b>GYAC Collective Advocacy Efforts</b>	9
<b>2020 GYAC Highlights</b>	11
<b>GYAC Members</b>	
Kalenga Lubembele	12
Bahati Musuhuke	12
Barthelemy Ngane Mwanza	13
Faridah Luanda	15
Hadjara Maikano Fadila	17
Gabriela Ernestina Osorio Rodriguez	19
Ismael Gamboa Ocampo	21
Safia Ibrahimkhel	23
Abdul Karim Albrm	25
<b>2020 GYAC Mentors Program</b>	27
<b>GYAC Mentors</b>	
Arash Bordbar	29
Ibrahim Sallet Mahamat	31
Asif Safdary	33
Mariama Saran Sow	35
Foni Joyce Vuni	37
<b>Looking Forward: GYAC 2021</b>	33

# 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, internally 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 the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) at all levels. The GYAC is composed of nine young people between the ages of 18 and 27 who come from diverse backgrounds. UNHCR's Division of International Protection and the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) jointly support and coordinate the work of the GYAC. GYAC is strengthening its systems and structures so it can function as a more fully youth-led group.

## What do GYAC delegates do?



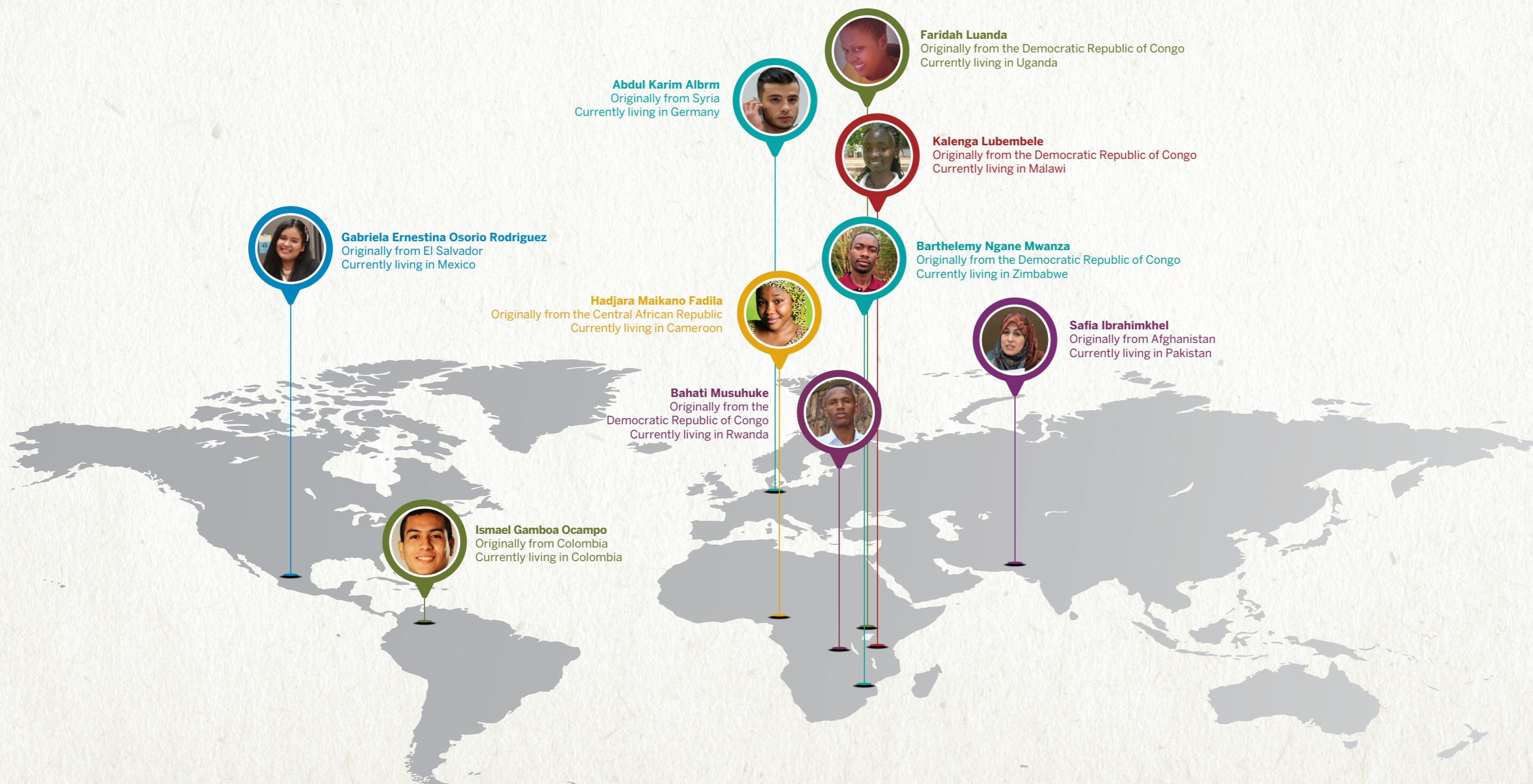
- Consult with their communities to get broader input on the key challenges for refugees and recommendations for how to address them.
- Use their voices to amplify the concerns and suggestions of young people in displacement contexts by speaking on panels at international conferences and meetings, including 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 and IDP policy through interviews, social media, videos and blogs.
- Review and provide feedback on policies, strategies, guidance documents and training products for UNHCR and partners and serve on reference groups for research and policy initiatives.
- Collaborate with local-level practitioners to improve the services for refugee and internally 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 internally displaced youth perspectives for events such as the UNHCR High Commissioner's Dialogue, the NGO Consultations and 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 2020, the GYAC has been active in meeting those challenges!

# Who are the GYAC Members?



## A Note from the Co-Chairs: Strengthening GYAC in the Midst of a Pandemic

### 2020 has been an extraordinary year.

At the end of 2019, the GYAC participated in the Global Refugee Forum and co-sponsored the workstreams of Education and Protection, specifically on the sub-theme of “Youth”. The GYAC pledged to contribute strategic leadership and technical assistance to connect and empower refugee youth. GYAC also committed to focusing during 2020 on strengthening its structures and systems to enhance its sustainability as a youth-led group.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, implementation of the pledge and efforts to strengthen GYAC’s youth leadership have unfolded in unplanned, but innovative and compelling, ways.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a new kind of humanitarian crisis, and young refugees and internally displaced youth have responded by showing tremendous leadership in responding to meet the needs and challenges of their communities. Like everyone everywhere, refugee and internally displaced youth, and their communities, have been impacted by government regulations to limit the spread of the virus. Business closures, bans on street vendors and stay-at-home orders have left many without an income. Suspension of school and university classes has interrupted learning for children and young people. Lockdowns and closures have limited access to healthcare and protection supports. Many girls, women and others facing domestic violence or sexual exploitation have had nowhere to turn. Humanitarian actors who typically distribute food and non-food items, monitor the protection situation, program activities and conduct outreach in urban and camp refugee situations have had to restrict the movement of their national and international staff. In many locations this has resulted in a significant reduction in key services.

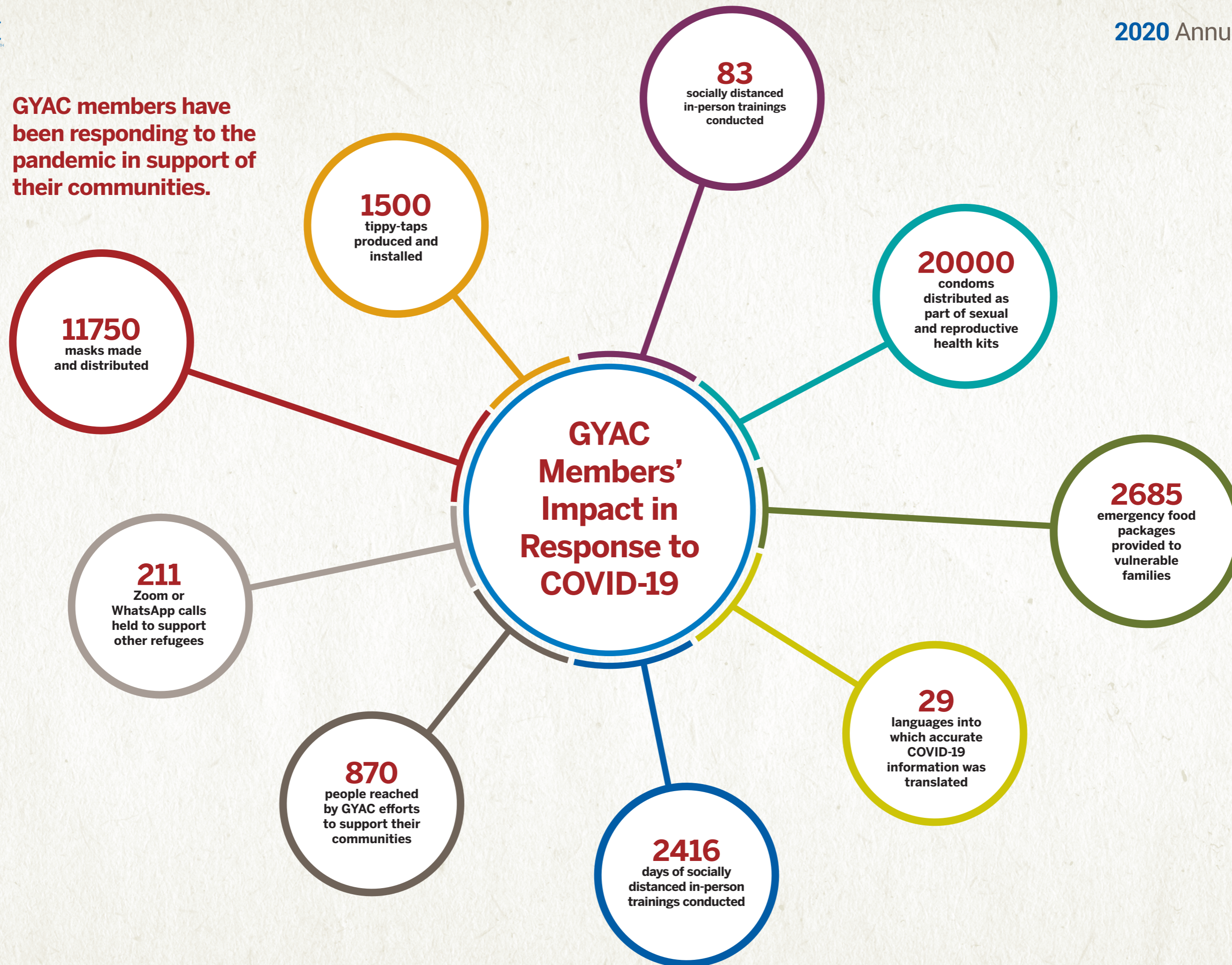


Into this gap in services have stepped refugee and internally displaced youth who have assessed the needs of their communities and led actions to address them. Young people have been making a positive impact with minimal resources throughout the pandemic. Refugee and internally displaced youth are identifying and responding to the struggles that their neighbours are facing. They are fully present, engaged and empowered. Refugees and internally displaced youth have been involved in the following types of activities:

- Informing the community about how to avoid spreading COVID-19
- Making and distributing hygiene kits with tippy-taps, soap and masks
- Identifying and addressing protection concerns, like girls at risk of child marriage, transactional sex and domestic violence
- Distributing sexual and reproductive health kits
- Providing online training
- Disseminating accurate information about COVID-19
- Raising funds to purchase food and hygiene items to distribute to vulnerable members of their communities
- Organizing discussions and trainings on child protection and parenting during the pandemic
- Providing psychosocial first aid to other refugees in their mother tongue
- Making and sharing videos about the contributions of refugee and displaced youth to respond to the pandemic
- Promoting talents and skills, such as arts, sports and culture, to revive youth spirits
- Encouraging food management and non-discrimination in food allocation
- Welcoming back those who have had to quarantine, without discrimination
- Supporting online education in places where classes have been suspended
- Organizing weekly online conversation with refugee doctors in different languages

We are proud of these efforts and urge other humanitarian and development actors to recognize and reinforce the work of refugee and internally displaced youth.

GYAC members have been responding to the pandemic in support of their communities.



# GYAC Collective Advocacy Efforts

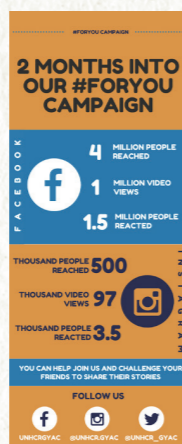
## # ForYou!

In response to the Pandemic, GYAC worked with other young leaders to develop a campaign highlighting how refugee and internally displaced youth have been stepping up and taking action to support their communities to cope with the multiple challenges. GYAC members filmed short videos of themselves taking action to help their communities with the tagline "I do this for you." and then challenged others to share with the hashtag #ForYou Campaign. The campaign had huge reach and was promoted by the World Health Organization.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=749383759222857>

[https://twitter.com/unhcr\\_gyac?lang=en](https://twitter.com/unhcr_gyac?lang=en)

<https://www.instagram.com/unhcr.gyac/?hl=af>



## # DayoftheAfricanChild 17 June

A GYAC member celebrated the Day of the African Child by speaking on the rights and responsibilities of African children as part of a WhatsApp discussion focused on "Child-Friendly Justice".

## # InternationalRefugeeDay 20 June

To celebrate Refugee Day, GYAC members:

- Did an interview with Isha Sesay to share their life journey and recommend to the international community that women and young people have more meaningful participation in decision-making and peacebuilding.
- Participated in an online session Education in Crisis and Innovative Pathways, organized by Kiron, an organization that promotes refugees in higher education.
- Collaborated with UNHCR Berlin to make a statement on the importance of support for refugees' mental health and psychosocial support.
- Spoke on the New York Public Radio show Micropolis (<https://thegreenespace.org/event/world-refugee-day/>) to introduce GYAC, the challenges refugee youth globally face and the leadership role that young refugees play.
- Took part in the Amnesty International Kenya tweet chat leading up to Refugee Day celebrations.

## # InternationalYouthDay 12 August

GYAC commemorated International Youth Day by highlighting the important roles that youth play in their communities around the world. GYAC members:

- Used a WhatsApp discussion event to highlight issues of importance to refugee youth in Zimbabwe: addressing early pregnancy; improving quality of and access to educational opportunities; facilitating youth networking; and supporting youth-led initiatives.
- Produced and shared videos to celebrate youth and built two semi-permanent homes for people with special needs in Uganda and planted trees around the community.
- Took over the UN Youth Envoy's Twitter account to share their own story and talk about the impacts of the pandemic on the lives of refugee youth.

## # WorldHumanitarianDay 19 August

GYAC collaborated with the UN Major Group for Children and Youth (UNMGCY) to celebrate World Humanitarian Day with a webinar focused on "The roles of young people in COVID-19 and the humanitarian response" and contributed with an intervention showcasing the contribution of refugee and forcibly displaced youth.

## # InternationalDayoftheGirl 11 October

In Zimbabwe, GYAC organized socially distanced yoga sessions for girls in Tongogara Refugee Camp. In Germany, a GYAC member presented a statement on the value of girl children. In Uganda, a GYAC member organized a capacity-building training to empower girls and combat child marriages and gender-based violence.

## # 2020UNHCRVirtualHighCommissionersDialogue October 2020

GYAC members spoke at the opening session about displaced people battling the same virus as the rest of the world but facing greater challenges, including a decrease in the possibility of self-reliance that many refugees previously enjoyed, less access to health care facilities and a suspension of key services in camps. GYAC members also shared how refugee communities are stepping up to improve prevention and address issues caused by the pandemic.

## # GYACGRFPledge

GYAC updated its pledge to the Global Refugee Forum in June and December 2020: GYAC members also participated in a series of roundtable discussions on refugee experiences with education before and during COVID-19 organized by International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) to share with the Global Refugee Forum through the education co-sponsorship alliance.

## # 16DaysofActivism 16 November – 10 December 2020

GYAC teamed up with Tertiary Refugee Student Network (TRSN) to organize activities to combat gender-based violence (GBV). They organized WhatsApp discussion sessions and Facebook live sessions and actively posted and reposted local events to combat GBV.

## # YouthwithRefugeesArtContest

GYAC members participated as jurors in the [youth with refugees art contest](https://www.artsteps.com/view/5f59e3ab58d20f2627a01b9a) to encourage young people aged 12-25 to draw in solidarity with refugees amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://www.artsteps.com/view/5f59e3ab58d20f2627a01b9a>

# GYAC Highlights

2020 presented new and unique challenges, but also fresh opportunities.

Each GYAC member responded to those challenges and opportunities in unique and innovative ways.



## Welcome Kalenga and Bahati!

Two new members joined GYAC at the end of 2020

### Kalenga Lubembele

Kalenga Lubembele is a 19 year old youth delegate originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), but now living in Malawi. She was born in DRC and arrived in a refugee camp in Malawi at the age of 12. Kalenga completed secondary school in Malawi and is now pursuing an online diploma program in liberal arts at Regis University through the Jesuit Worldwide learning. Kalenga works with an organization known as Holistic Focus for Marginalized which promote self-reliance and education for youths and marginalized people. She also works as a journalist at a community radio in the refugee camp, where she also presents a youth program. She works with Plan International Malawi in the Girls Get Equal and the Champions of Change campaigns which promote gender equality by empowering girls and including boys. Kalenga is a girls' empowerment ambassador working with a group called Girls Union for Empowerment Action (GUFEA).



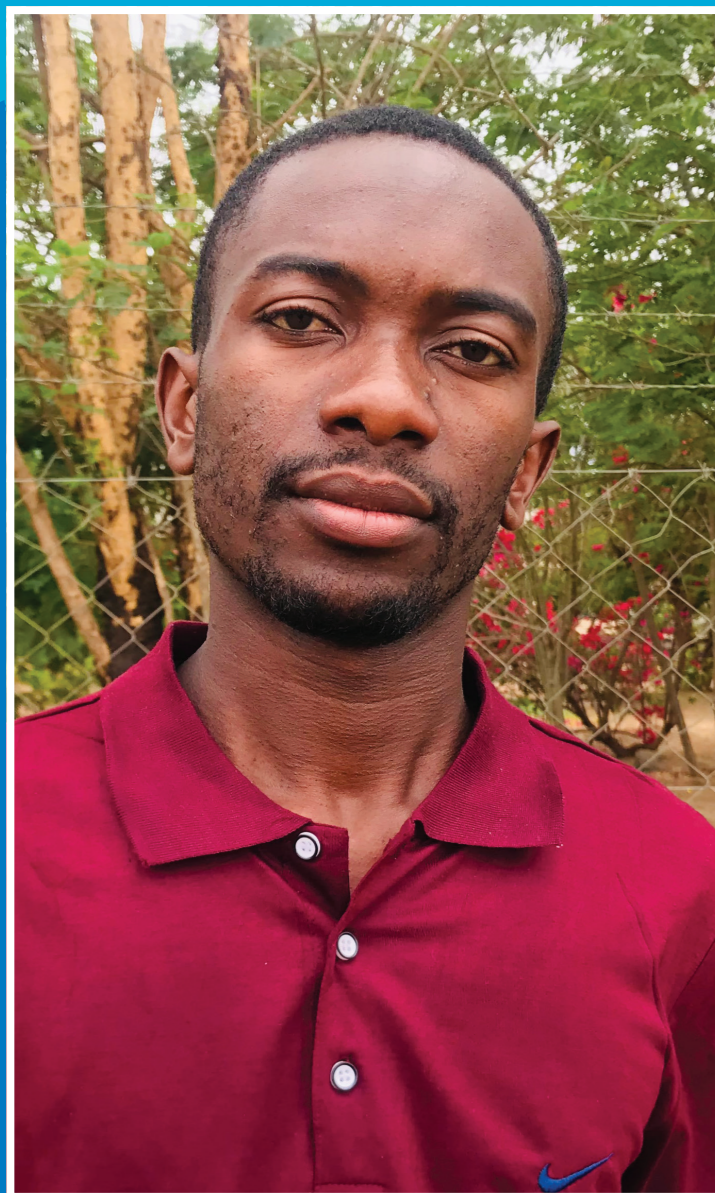
### Bahati Musuhuke

Bahati Musuhuke is a 22-year-old youth delegate originally from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), now living in Rwanda. He was born and grew up in Gihembe Refugee Camp in Gicumbi district, Rwanda. Bahati completed high school in Rwanda, graduated from Southern New Hampshire University in Business Management, concentrating on Logistics and operations. He has volunteered in Kepler college for one year as Teaching and Learning Assistant at Kepler Kigali. Bahati is a youth activist working for youth empowerment and development, advocating and supporting in education, and conflict resolution in youth. He is currently supporting youth projects and participating in teaching computer science to refugees in Kigali, Rwanda. He is also supervising and coordinating youth coordinators from eight camps, where refugees are located.



## Africa

# Barthelemy Ngane Mwanza



Barth is 27 years old and comes from the DRC. He has lived in the Tongogara refugee camp in Zimbabwe with his sister and her family since their flight from DRC in 2012.

*"Peace is respecting people, appreciating them and understanding their uniqueness."*

*-Barth Ngane Mwanza*

Barth brings his passion for journalism, film and publishing, together with his leadership and advocacy skills, to his efforts to combat GBV and climate change and to advocate for education, child protection, entrepreneurship, inclusion, peacebuilding, food equity and mental health counselling. During 2020 Barth has worked with other youth to expand refugee youth networks, mentor young refugees and facilitate training.

As an advocate for child protection and against GBV, Barth advocates for child rights through his work with the Regional Network of the Children and Young People Trust (RNCYPT), a child and youth rights organization that works to ensure that children and young people are active citizens who demand their rights, hold duty bearers to account and mobilize communities for the respect, promotion and fulfilment of children's rights. Barth started a blog to highlight these activities in the Tongogara Refugee Camp. <https://rncypt.org/youth-take-charge-monthly-newsletter>.

Barth has been very active in promoting men's role in combatting GBV. He facilitated the UNHCR Engaging Men and Boys Through Accountable Practices (EMAP) project, which seeks to involve men in understanding and combatting the root causes of gender inequality and gender violence in the Tongogara Refugee Camp. He led a series of intensive training workshops for 110 participants – men and women – on how to build a violence-free community. This culminated in a community marathon held in conjunction with the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV and a session of yoga.

Barth has mentored young refugees who took part in the Social Innovation Academy (SINA) and worked with them to co-found the Transformation Innovation Hub (TIH) in Tongogara Refugee Camp. The TIH is a youth-led organization that supports young people to discover their



inner abilities and find their purpose aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. The TIH helps young refugees to create self-sustaining social enterprises that turn problems into opportunities. Its goal is to make youths job creators rather than job seekers. He has also been active promoting young refugees' talents by linking artists with newspaper, radio and television personalities and through a YouTube Channel called Zimfunny. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0GQRNMKVm8&t=51s>.

[watch?v=h0GQRNMKVm8&t=51s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0GQRNMKVm8&t=51s).

As part of his work to address climate change, Barth has worked locally to promote sustainable food production and management approaches and engaged with Real Food Systems, an advocacy platform committed to promoting sustainable food systems as a solution to climate and related crises. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CDJF3U-H3Ig/>.

## Africa

# Faridah Luanda



Faridah is a 22 year-old woman from DRC who currently lives in Uganda. She is a mother, a friend, founder of DaVision Group and co-builder of One Touch (solar powered) Music Studio, which specializes in producing songs with a social message.

*"I love what I am doing, and I think it is everyone's responsibility to make a change."*

-Faridah Luanda

Faridah is passionate about being true, empowerment and helping others to find their passions. She likes learning new things and spending time with her family.

Faridah is a fierce and powerful advocate against child marriage, GBV and teen pregnancy and for the empowerment of girls and women. She has trained youth to use their stories to advocate for change. Within her community she routinely intervenes with families thinking about selling their daughters into marriage. As an extension of her work to reduce child marriage, Faridah, together with DaVision Group, constructed a training centre. The centre teaches crafts, design, tailoring and public speaking skills to support out of school girls, young mothers and vulnerable women to be self-reliant, become more independent and confident, and to bring change in their community. The centre also responds to the need for more information about sexual and reproductive health. Faridah ran a campaign #Jifunze ukingo – learn protection – where she shared advice to prevent HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancy. As part of this campaign, Faridah gave out more than 20,000 condoms to young refugees and host community youth in Kyaka II.

Faridah has been working tirelessly to help her community respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. With DaVision Group, she produced hundreds of "tippy-taps", home-made handwashing stations that enable households far from running water to be able to wash hands regularly. She distributed these, together with liquid soap and information on the importance of hygiene measures. She also produced a song about COVID-19 and the importance of hand washing and social distancing. <https://youtu.be/U7gNiL6begE>



In response to the hardships due to restrictions, Faridah organized distribution of food packages, soap and face masks for those in need. She shared her work on the tippy-taps on a global UNHCR WASH webinar focused on response to COVID-19. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqa3Pu71pAw&feature=youtu.be>

Despite the pandemic, Faridah managed to organize a session of the Youth Parliament that she started in 2018. This year she brought 56 youth leaders together with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), UNHCR and partners, and moderated an outdoor socially distanced gathering to share ideas about "The role of Young people amidst COVID-19". Discussion focused on overcoming barriers to youth participation and employment, well-being and education.

## Africa

# Hadjara Maikano Fadila



Hadjara is 20 years old and is originally from the Central African Republic (CAR); she now lives in Cameroon.

*"I help young refugees because I feel great satisfaction in doing it and I want to be able to provide others with what is needed. I love to see the impact I can have on the lives of others by giving them just a little cheerfulness despite all the problems they face. When one person helps another while they are also in difficulty, it is not help, it is love."*

-Hadjara Maikano Fadila

Hadjara is passionate about communication – reading, writing and computers – and about girls' education. As a GYAC member she focuses on protection of children and young people, combatting sexual violence, financial empowerment of girls and integration of refugees into host communities.

Hadjara has helped to create a girls' leadership group to empower young refugee girls and promote their entrepreneurship. She teaches girls how to manufacture household products (liquid soaps, bleach), and introduces them to techniques to promote the online sales of their products. This will enable the girls to concentrate on their studies and also to sell their products. Hadjara also organized an excursion to the French Institute of Cameroon with the help of Plan International. She invited 20 refugees, including DAFI scholars and some young Cameroonians. Together, they had the opportunity to cultivate their minds and learn about the digital books and printed materials at the French Cultural Center. It was a rewarding activity that was new too many participants. This opportunity to explore cultural resources also strengthened social bonds between young people and was greatly appreciated. Hadjara also participated in the UNHCR webinar on *Displaced Youth and UNHCR*.

In the fight against COVID-19 and its spread, Hadjara organized a distribution of washable masks for vulnerable people. She also organized an online information dissemination campaign on preventive measures with young people residing in the CAR as well as a small training course on fabric masks production and the correct use of these.



## The Americas

# Gabriela Ernestina Osorio Rodriguez



Gabriela is 22 and is originally from El Salvador; she now lives in Mexico. Gabriela is passionate in her belief that education is essential for refugees all over the world and her advocacy for free and accessible education for all.

*"Life will put obstacles in your way, but the limits are up to you; being big is not a question of size, but of attitude, strength and faith."*

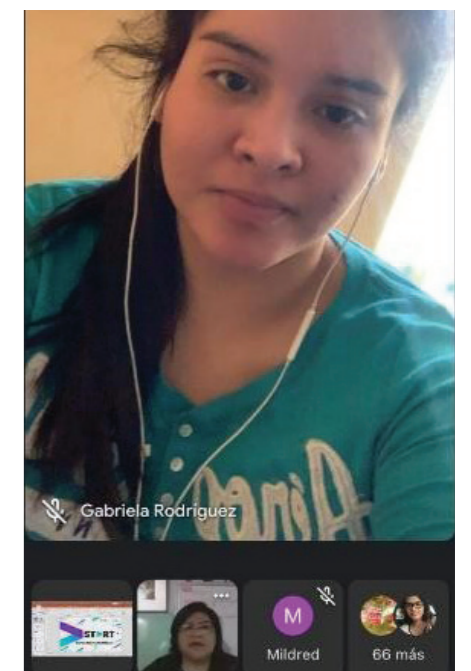
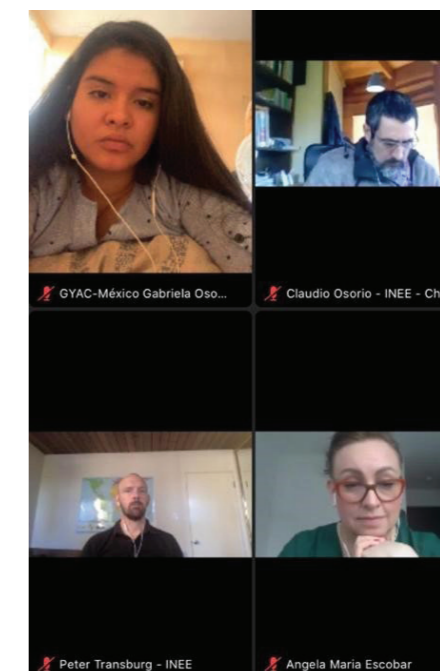
-Gabriela Ernestina Osorio Rodriguez

Gabriela brings skills on financial management and education advocacy to her youth work. She is also committed to using her experience and expertise to amplify the voices of youth from the LGBTQI community. As a member of the GYAC, Gabriela focuses on the issues of education and sexuality.

Although COVID-19 has disrupted how young people interact, they have continued to engage virtually. Gabriela takes part in monthly discussions on different topics that provide a safe space to talk about challenges. These discussion spaces have also provided an opportunity to share information about the Core Actions for Refugee Youth, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/59dc80184.html> in a way that promotes refugee leadership in the different spaces they are in. She noted that "Having face-to-face sessions during the sessions like before would be great, but we have had to adapt to the new reality".

Gabriela participated in a roundtable discussion organized by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) to facilitate discussion on refugees to share their experiences of education before and during COVID-19. The recommendations from the five roundtables will be synthesized and communicated to the Global Refugee Forum.

Gabriela has been active supporting her community to respond to COVID-19. She has distributed food packages and clothes to vulnerable people in her community. She consolidated and shared vital information on measures to prevent COVID-19. She also attended a meeting on LGBTQI concerns, where she shared her perspective as a refugee.



- <https://www.instagram.com/p/CD1rnUxjkvg/>
- <https://www.instagram.com/p/CDyGZ4-jhnG/>
- [https://twitter.com/UNHCR\\_GYAC/status/1293971518997909504](https://twitter.com/UNHCR_GYAC/status/1293971518997909504)
- [https://issuu.com/wrcommission/docs/gyac\\_2019annualreport\\_final-re2](https://issuu.com/wrcommission/docs/gyac_2019annualreport_final-re2)
- <https://www.unhcr.org/5d974f694.pdf>

## The Americas

# Ismael Gamboa Ocampo



Ismael, 25 years old, is internally displaced within Colombia and lives close to the Venezuelan border. His passions are peacebuilding and communication processes that generate learning and narratives for the consolidation of memory.

***“COVID-19 made us fight together, as one country, regardless of whether we are displaced persons or refugees. Life prevails.”***

***-Ismael Gamboa Ocampo***

Ismael brings tremendous expertise in community education, peace dialogues and communication to his role as a GYAC member. He is committed to developing skills amongst other young promoters of civic co-existence and community leaders.

*Un Joven de Frontera*, a youth of the border area, Ismael has dedicated himself to “Young Volunteers Transforming the Border”, a youth-led project that brings together Colombian and Venezuelan youth and seeks to promote peaceful coexistence by carrying out participatory diagnoses and supporting communities to develop projects. Ismael supports other young leaders to develop their capacity and runs workshops on citizen participation and youth activism. He has also conducted a participatory diagnosis training with children, adolescents and young people of the *Destellos de Vida Foundation*. Ismael participated in *Commun-Action, Youth Mobilization*, which brought young people together to develop various skills in rap, graffiti and other forms of expression. <https://youtu.be/DuWd9tzXWGY>.

During 2020, Ismael turned to YouTube as a space for the expression and amplification of youth voices in the special border area between Colombia and Venezuela. He seeks to capture and shine a light on that space on the margins, where young people dare to create: to do graffiti, rap, photography, crafts, poetry and spoken word. He is trying to mobilize engagement and give meaning to youth action. In this space he fights for popular education and human rights. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C94juaJizA&feature=youtu.be>.

Ismael was selected as a member of the *International Network of Sustainable Development Goal Promoters* and as a panellist at the the IV *Latin American and Caribbean Biennial, on childhood and youth*. He is planning to take his research,



*Nos-Otros, los jóvenes* (Our others, young people) to those spaces. Ismael also served as a panellist for the Age, Gender, Diversity and Internal Displacement Dialogue related to the work of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement and shared his recommendations on how empowering communities on human rights, creating safe spaces in schools, promoting clear and accessible routes for new community leadership are all

actions to prevent displacement. For the commemoration of the International Migrants Day, Ismael was a panellist at an event, *I am a Migrant*, organized by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Finally, Ismael wrote a script and filmed and directed a short film on dignifying the victims of forced displacement in Colombia and the world.

## Asia

# Safia Ibrahimkhel

Safia Ibrahimkhel is a 25-year-old youth delegate originally from Afghanistan, now living in Pakistan. She was born and grew up in an Afghan refugee camp in Peshawar, Pakistan.

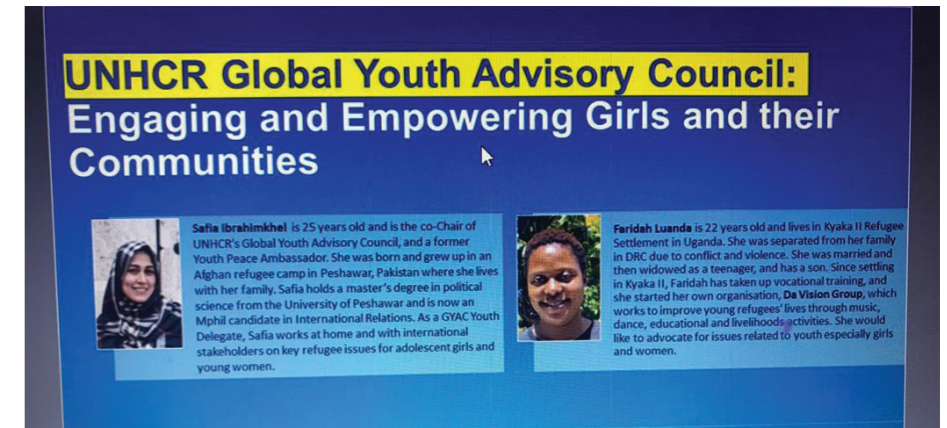
**“Youth and women’s empowerment is the process that creates power in individuals over their own lives and in their communities. People are empowered when they are able to access opportunities. Feeling entitled to make your own decisions creates a sense of empowerment”**

-Safia Ibrahimkhel



Safia completed high school in Peshawar, graduated from college with a major in Political Science and Sociology and later completed her master’s degree in Political Science from the University of Peshawar. She is now pursuing an MPhil in International Relations at Quaid Azam University in Islamabad. Safia is a Youth Activist working for women’s socio-economic empowerment, advocating for education, and peace building. She is a former Youth peace Ambassador for Pakistan and Afghanistan Youth Dialogues. She is a youth consultant and one of the Co-chairs of the UNHCR Global Youth Advisory Council (GYAC) and a founding member and Global Student Leader in the Tertiary Refugee Students Network (TRSN).

During 2020, Safia was active in promoting women’s role in peacebuilding and humanitarian action. In February, she participated in *Connecting Women Leaders Beyond Boundaries for Peace & Development* and presented on the importance of education for refugee women. She also took part in a conference *40 Years of Afghan Refugees Presence in Pakistan: A New Partnership for Solidarity*, where she shared her life journey and highlighted the importance of the refugee youth voice. She took part in *Pak-Afghan Youth Dialogues* organized by the Centre for Research and Security Studies, where she presented on the role of young people in peace processes and peacebuilding. In August, Safia took part in a UNHCR webinar, *Ending Child Marriage*, to share her personal insights, experiences and recommendations. Safia also contributed to research and strategic consultations undertaken by the Women’s Refugee Commission focused on *Gender Transformative Change in Humanitarian Action*. In October, she spoke on a panel *Ensuring Feminist and Localized Humanitarian Emergency Response: Where Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action Meet*, to celebrate the anniversary of UN Resolution 1325



on Women, Peace and Security. She also participated in the UNHCR webinar on Displaced Youth and UNHCR.

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Safia conducted online trainings for refugee youth leaders on disseminating correct information about COVID-19. She distributed food to needy families and those with disabilities. She also participated in a virtual summit amongst Pakistani and Afghan young people exploring the role of young people during COVID-19 and making recommendations on strengthening the relations of both countries in this challenging time.

Safia joined the Youth General Assembly of Pakistan as the first refugee youth representative in this assembly. She will bring refugee voices to this forum and share how inclusion and integration of refugees in national plans can solve refugee and host community problems and can contribute to the development of both communities.

Safia has continued her advocacy for refugee education. In addition to her role with TRSN, Safia also joined Humanitarian Education Accelerator (HEA), an online session led by refugee students and graduates to exchange ideas and experiences on how to ensure children don’t fall behind during COVID-19. She also took part in an INEE virtual workshop and a workshop organized by Kepler Refugee Guidance Counsellors and the UNHCR Education team.

Safia also facilitated a 6-day training for 30 young people on *Leadership, Civic Engagement and Conflict Resolution* in a refugee camp in Pakistan.

## Europe

# Abdul Karim Albrm



Karim is 24 and is originally from Aleppo, Syria.

***"When people who have experienced trauma can learn to cope with it, they can support each other, they can support their communities. This builds resilience. Our societies need this support from us now and later when wars end. I strongly encourage funding more psychosocial first aid and counselor training for refugees in order to help them to help their communities. So, let us all work together to spread resiliency around the world."***

***-Abdul Karim Albrm***

Karim travelled 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 and now lives in Hamburg.

Karim is passionate about protection and psychosocial support for refugee children and youth. He brings those passions to his work to promote inclusive education, family reunification and voluntary repatriation, while always combating xenophobia. He loves to train other young people to run psychosocial support workshops.

In January, Karim met with the German Ministry for Family Affairs, Women and Youth to advocate for the protection and rights of children and the role of youth to support children. Karim has worked hard to advance recognition of the importance of psychosocial support for young refugees. In March, he spoke in Berlin on Psychosocial Support for Academics at Risk at the Philip Schwartz Forum.

During the pandemic, Karim has been mentoring young people and providing psychosocial support. He also took part in a virtual conference with the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands and German authorities focused on the crucial role of young people and mental health and psychosocial support in the Syria crisis response. He advocated for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and economic support for refugees during COVID-19, as well as for support for those displaced in the Middle East. He also contributed to a training for youth on mental health and psychosocial support.



# Strengthening GYAC Sustainability: **Mentors' Program**

In 2020, GYAC launched a mentors' program to ensure that when GYAC members move on to new roles, we capture rather than lose the skills, capacities and institutional knowledge that they gained during their term with GYAC. The GYAC mentors' program takes a peer-to-peer approach to share knowledge, experience and skills related to GYAC work to support newer members and strengthen different aspects of their work and growth.

This program enables mentors to engage with current GYAC members and provide 1:1 support and mentoring to current or incoming members on an ongoing basis in their own language. This preserves the institutional memory, builds individual GYAC capacity and strengthens GYAC systems and structures.

## Who are the **2020 GYAC Mentors?**

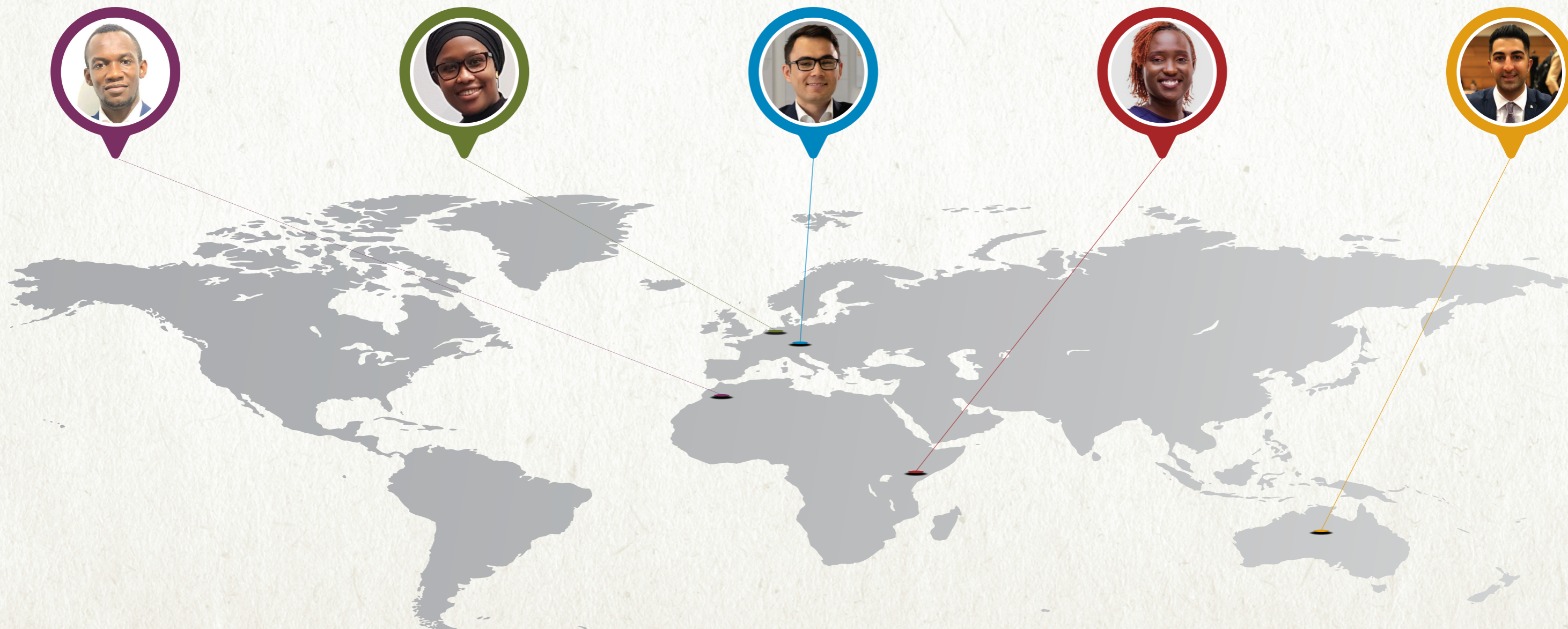
**Ibrahim Sallet Mahamat**  
Originally from the Central African Republic  
Currently living in Morocco

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

**Asif Safdary**  
Originally from Afghanistan  
Currently living in Austria

**Foni Joyce Vuni**  
Originally from South Sudan  
Currently living in Kenya

**Arash Bordbar**  
Originally from Iran  
Currently living in Australia



## Asia

# Arash Bordbar



Arash is originally from Iran and lived in Malaysia for five years as an asylum seeker before being resettled to Australia five years ago. Now 27, Arash recently completed his engineering degree.

*"It is really important to know that refugees are the key stakeholders, and we should make sure not to only include their voices, but to engage them directly in all the processes from designing the projects to implementation and evaluation. It is also important to recognize that the needs of young people are distinct from [those of] children and adults, and to especially take account of the special needs of young women and girls. If you really want to make a change in this world, then hear our voices, fight with us and include us."*

*-Arash Bordbar*

Arash is passionate about creating new and different pathways for refugees to access education and opportunities for growth. He has been active in advocating for refugee rights and leadership in Australia, the Asia Pacific Region and globally. Arash served GYAC from December 2017 through August 2020.

Arash has continued to be a powerful advocate for refugee leadership. He spoke at the University of Sydney about the rise of refugee self-representation in global dialogue and at the *Affinity Youth Lecture Series* on young leaders and their role in shaping the 21st century. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfoKfAe5WQ&list=PLkPOb5i8hMtRzpN-l3hBKLjqiLtnFji7Q>. He also worked with the Australian government to share ideas on how community refugee sponsorship could support young refugees settle in Australia. <https://www.ausrefugeesponsorship.com.au/about/ambassadors/>. As Australia Day Ambassador 2020 for the third year in a row, Arash spoke to Australian communities about refugee youth and their contribution to Australia. He also presented to Members of Parliament in Australia about the challenges refugees face, and moderated and spoke at the *Refugee Alternative Conference* in Australia, where he promoted GYAC.

Arash has continued to campaign for refugees' access to tertiary education and has worked closely with UNHCR Centre for Refugee Studies in Asia Pacific, as promoted in the Times Higher Education Conference <http://tes.shocklogic.com/the-live/asia/programme>.

Throughout the pandemic, Arash has run online workshops to support refugee youth mental health, technology skills, employment, innovation and education through his role with Community Migrant Resource Centre (CMRC). He also organized #RefugeesRise to facilitate refugee doctors to provide information in their mother tongue around COVID-19 safety and prevention measures.



Although he has completed his term as a GYAC member, Arash will bring the skills and knowledge that he gained as a GYAC member, including public speaking, effective leadership, collaboration, proposal writing and advocacy to his efforts to mentor other young people. Since leaving GYAC, Arash has taken on several new challenges: GYAC coordinator

with the Women's Refugee Commission, chair of the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN), UNHCR Annual Tripartite Consultation on Resettlement (ATCR) Refugee Advisory Group and Youth Enterprise and Employment Officer with the Community Migrant Resource Centre (CMRC) in Australia.

## Middle East and North Africa

# Ibrahim Sallet Mahamat



Ibrahim is 26 years old and is from the Central African Republic. He currently lives in Rabat, Morocco, where he started a local organization, **Vivre Ensemble**, focused on promoting understanding about refugees, combatting xenophobia and promoting local integration.

*"It is important for me to contribute in order to support vulnerable refugees as well as migrants in distress in these very difficult times."*

*-Ibrahim Sallet Mahamat*

Ibrahim served as a GYAC member from December 2017 to August 2020. As a member of GYAC and now as a GYAC mentor, Ibrahim has brought a calm eloquence to his advocacy to combat xenophobia and promote understanding of refugees and local integration.

In 2020, Ibrahim participated in Youth Innovation Summit (YIS), a digital event that brought together more than 100 talented youth – entrepreneurs, technical experts and academics – selected for their motivation to change the world. The event involved experts and private sector actors to help design start-ups to meet the challenge of sustainable development in Morocco. Ibrahim used this as an opportunity to highlight the importance of young refugees being able to access sports facilities and training academies, and he contributed to adapting an innovative training model for unemployed young people.

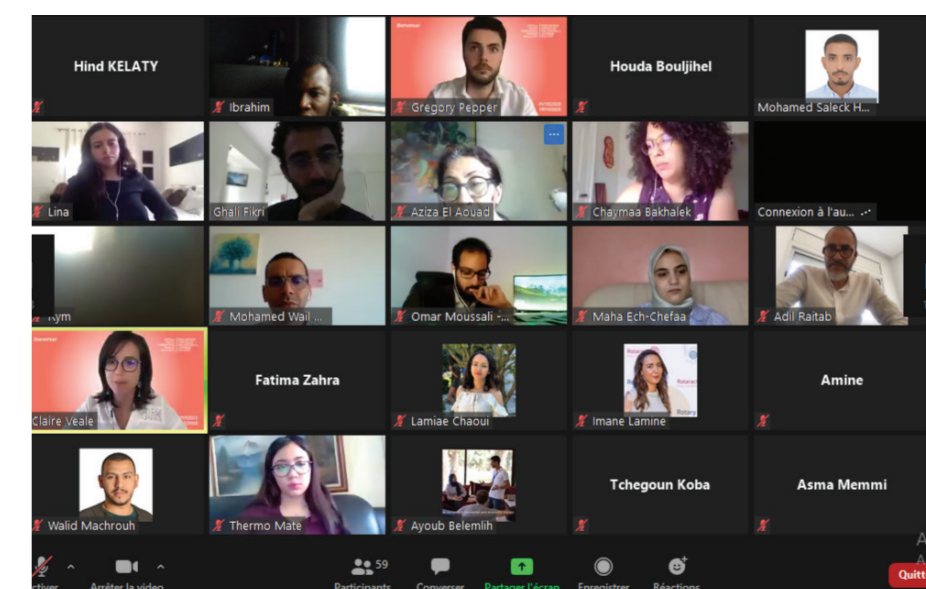
Ibrahim identified that COVID-19 has severely impacted young refugees financially and left them without housing or food. Many people of colour have been severely impacted by measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, which have disrupted income-generation activities. He has organized a volunteer service for young health professionals to work with young refugees and migrants and provide information, education and support. For those who have no shelter he teaches hygiene measures to help them avoid contamination. He also facilitates psychological support by directing them to a free number in order to get advice on mental health. He helps migrants and refugees to understand that they have the same rights as Moroccans to seek treatment in hospitals. He also worked with UNHCR partners to identify the most vulnerable families and help distribute food and other support items to them. He observes that refugees and migrants are sometimes left to their own devices without there being enough initiatives to

## Winners

Overview of the winners of the 2020 NGO Innovation Award



**Association Vivre Ensemble pour la Citoyenneté et le Développement, Morocco**



support them. Since completing his term with GYAC, Ibrahim joined the GYAC graduate mentors. He continues as a member of UNHCR's Protection Working Group. He

also continues to lead Vivre Ensemble, which in 2020 was awarded the UNHCR Innovation Prize for its forward-looking work. <https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/unhcr-ngo-innovation-award-2020>.

## Europe

# Asif Safdary

Asif is 27 years old and fled the conflict in Afghanistan at the age of 14. He travelled on his own as a separated child and sought asylum in Austria where he finished school and university.

*"I am optimistic that stakeholder pledges at the Global Refugee Forum will support refugees and host communities to improve their lives. We as refugee youth are contributing to make that happen. This is a great example of meaningful refugee participation."*

-Asif Safdary

Asif now lives in Vienna, where he works on cyber security and is completing his MBA. He is a board member of the Afghan Student Association. Asif is passionate about supporting refugee students to reach their potential and contribute to their new country.

Together with Zonta (<https://www.zonta.org>), Asif organized a workshop for young women and men to sensitize young people about child marriage and ways to protect themselves. Refugees, especially children and young people, relocating to countries of asylum, often face a culture clash. This workshop was also a forum for them to share the challenges they are facing as refugees in a new country and adopting a new culture.

In responding to the COVID-19 crisis, Asif worked with others to translate accurate and up-to-date information about the pandemic into refugees' mother tongues to ensure that they could understand the news and regulations about lockdown and other measures to stop the spread of COVID-19.

As a board member of Afghan Student Association, Asif helps refugee students integrate themselves in the Austrian society through education. During the pandemic, many schools closed, and refugee students faced challenges in trying to manage online classes because they were not able to access direct support from teachers anymore and many refugee families struggled with homeschooling because of the language barrier or lack of education. Asif and the Afghan Student Association identified mentees who needed help and matched them with mentors. He wrote a project proposal for the European Student Union (ESU), which was funded. The Afghan Student Association also introduced a book club to help keep Afghan students reading. All members read a book which addresses the current challenges in the migrants' community, and they do virtual



calls at regular intervals to discuss the content and share experiences and best practices with each other.

## Europe

# Mariama Saran Sow



Originally from Guinea, Mariama travelled alone to Germany as a child to escape a forced marriage and the risk of female genital mutilation. Now 27 years old, she lives in Germany, where she completed a degree in social work.

---

***“As refugees, we can do things to hold ourselves accountable. We are refugees, but that doesn’t change our ability to take action.”***

***-Mariama Saran Sow***

---

Mariama served as a GYAC member from December 2017 to August 2020. As both a GYAC member and now as a mentor, Mariama has worked passionately to advance mental health and psychosocial support for young refugees, to empower refugee women and girls and to combat GBV. Her passion is being able to continue in this direction and to show that young refugees can take responsibility and are resilient and ingenious even through rough times.

During 2020, Mariama participated in the conference *The Fabric of Healing – Story Clothes by Survivors of Trauma, War and Gender-Based Violence*, where she spoke about her experience of GBV and the importance of psychosocial help.

During the pandemic, Mariama has raised awareness amongst the Guinean diaspora and non- German speaking migrants and refugees on the importance of preventive measures against the coronavirus disease. In a project with the City of Dortmund, Mariama, together with members of her group, has been sewing washable masks and distributing them to migrants and refugees in the community. She has visited refugee centres and coordinated with the authorities to ensure social distancing, distribution of masks and gloves and understanding of good hygiene measures at the centres. Throughout the pandemic, she has supported refugee families by providing parenting tips and home-schooling support. Mariama also provided direct support, counselling and referrals to women in violent relationships during the COVID-19 confinement.

In addition to becoming a GYAC graduate mentor in 2020, Mariama also took on a new position with the Municipal Council in Dortmund focused on developing immigration policies, supporting refugee and migrant integration in education and employment, advancing refugee participation and fighting racism and discrimination.



## Africa

# Foni Joyce Vuni



Foni is 28 and hails from South Sudan. She now lives in Nairobi, Kenya, where she completed her degree in communications and established an organization that links unemployed youth to opportunities and mentors.

*"I will continue to care more, even though it will cost me something. I may not be the solution, but I can be part of the solution by taking the first step to care for others."*

*-Foni Joyce Vuni*

Foni is a passionate advocate for refugee youth education and in support of refugee girls, women and youth as peacebuilders. Foni served as a member of GYAC from December 2017 through August 2020.

In February, she took part in the UNHCR Regional Bureau informal consultation in Nairobi to share experiences with experts on mental health and psychosocial support about current approaches and best practices to inform a new regional youth and peacebuilding initiative.

Working with the UNHCR Kenya Refugee Youth United Nations Volunteer, Foni created a WhatsApp group with young refugees in Nairobi to share information, such as the youth-friendly version of the Global Compact for Refugees. Once the pandemic hit, Foni was able to use this WhatsApp group to coordinate COVID-19 responses amongst five youth-led organizations. These youth-led groups organized food baskets, advocated for refugees to have SIM cards, worked together to conduct online trainings and provided feedback to the ATCR refugee statement on resettlement.

Foni continues to speak and advocate for refugee youth leadership in humanitarian response. She took part in a UN Youth Envoy blog series highlighting the 10 young people who are fighting coronavirus in their communities. <https://medium.com/@jayathmadw/meet-10-young-refugees-fighting-COVID19-355ce4ac07ba>.

Foni participated in events organized by Women Deliver involving international and research institutions spotlighting the power of refugee women in humanitarian action. Foni wrote a guest blog featured on the Humanitarian Practice Network website about the work that she and other young women are doing. <https://odihpn.org/blog/humanitarian4her-world-refugee-day/>. She also spoke in the UN Economic and Social Council's Humanitarian Affairs Segment (ECOSOC HAS) event: *Inclusive Humanitarian Action = Effective Humanitarian Action*, which



highlighted the important role that refugee women and girls play in shaping peace and humanitarian response and the value of a gendered response throughout humanitarian action. Foni spoke at the launch of the new Call to Action on GBV Road Map at the UN General Assembly side event <https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/news>. Finally, together with Arash, Foni wrote a GYAC article on *Effective Partnership Means Letting Refugee Youth Lead* - [Link](#)

Foni brings her skills and knowledge as a communicator, public speaker, organizer, advocate, peacebuilder and mentor to her new role as GYAC coordinator. She continues as part of the Tertiary Refugee Student Network leadership and also joined the Board of the Women's Refugee Commission.



## Looking Forward:

### GYAC and Refugee and Internally Displaced Youth Leadership 2021

Looking forward to 2021...

Young people are identifying and responding to the struggles that their neighbours are facing. Many forcibly displaced young people are ready and willing to lead solutions. They are fully present, engaged and empowered. We are proud of these efforts and hope that other humanitarian actors will recognize and reinforce their work.

We encourage all of you to:

- Invest in and support humanitarian and development programs which enhance the empowerment of youth, women, girls and vulnerable populations in areas such as education, livelihood, leadership skill/capacity building trainings, among others.
- Help refugees to have their expertise and experience recognized and support them by jointly creating opportunities for entrepreneurship, job creation, internship and vocational trainings, as well as opportunities within the UN system.
- Provide space for youth to contribute in policy and decision-making process.
- Enable transparency and accountability in programming in order to create real partnerships with young people. Access is also key for meaningful partnership and collaboration: Access to information, resources, and key stakeholders. This also helps build accountability.
- Ensure sustainable partnerships by creating an enabling environment with opportunities for continuous learning and funding so young refugees can grow and sustain their engagement. There is the need to have a trust mechanism where young people have the space to deliver.
- Give ownership and sense of belonging for the displaced youth: A sense of belonging to a place is important for everyone adapting to a new environment, but especially for displaced youth.
- Give and support the reception of refugees and displaced persons in the host community. This will support refugees to integrate into new the community, bring their skills and inspiration to contribute towards stability and socio-economic development.
- Continue supporting different platforms to promote diversity and inclusion by working with youth of different cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnicities, nationalities, sexual orientations, gender identity, disability, health, social and economic status.