



# OUR CALL FOR ANSWERS

Children's manifesto to the Global Refugee Forum 2023  
*in their own words*

**In the weeks running up to the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), 434 refugee children from eleven countries across the world participated in a series of consultations organized by the Initiative for Children Rights in the Global Compacts.**

The objective of these consultations was to inform children about the existence of the GRF and ask them what matters to them most so that the GRF organisers, governments and all participants in the GRF could listen to what they have to say.

The children that participated in the consultations, 247 girls and 187 boys (including 2 girls and 7 boys with a disability) originally came from different countries including, Ukraine, Egypt, Palestine, Somalia, Karen and Rohingya children from Myanmar, Yazidi children from Iraq, Syria, Burundi, Cuba, Nigeria, and elsewhere.

These consultations took place in the countries where the children now live, including Bosnia & Herzegovina, Greece, Iraq, Lebanon, Kenya, Peru, Serbia, Thailand, Uganda, Georgia, Niger.

### **CHILDREN USED GAMES, DRAWINGS, BODY MAPPING, TREE PLANNING AND ACTING, TO TALK AND SHARE IDEAS.**

#### **They discussed:**

- 1 Their needs and what would help them most now and in their future
- 2 How they can be a part of decisions about their lives
- 3 How they can be included in decisions and discussions where they live (in urban centres or in camps) and in global events like the GRF
- 4 Their views about the **Child Rights Pledge**, developed for and with children for the GRF

Children were also asked: **“If you could ask one question to those attending the GRF, what would that be?”**

**This Manifesto reflects, in their own words, their questions and their solutions.**



## CHILD PROTECTION



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## MAKE SURE THAT ALL CHILDREN CAN FEEL SAFE AND PROTECTED

Children were very clear. They asked to make sure that all children can feel safe and protected, no matter where they are and where they are from and to be treated with care, respect and dignity.

Children shared that they feel unsafe and worried. They fear for their lives. They face violence: physical, xenophobic and gender-based in their communities, in camps, at school, at home. They fear becoming separated from their families and loved ones. They struggle to find safe spaces where they can feel comfortable and protected and have someone to talk to.

- “We don’t feel safe. How can you ensure the safety of children so that they do not become victims of violence, including shootings?”  
*Refugee child*
- “Create safe and accessible spaces for all children.”  
*Refugee child, Lebanon*
- “The Child Friendly Space is the best place for me, we can play and laugh with other children and more places to play for all children will make us happy.”  
*Refugee girl, 13, from South Sudan in Uganda*
- “Create safe spaces where girls can go in cases of risk or when they feel vulnerable.”  
*Refugee girl, Peru*
- “Don’t leave girls alone.”  
*Refugee girl, 15, from Afghanistan, in Bosnia and Herzegovina*
- “Improve the safety in camps and launch anti-bullying campaigns.”  
*Refugee child in Lebanon*
- “Give us ways of reporting child abuse and exploitation so that anyone can get help as fast as possible.”  
*Refugee child, Lebanon*
- “Guarantee safe in-person and digital spaces for girls without harassment and bullying.”  
*Refugee girl, Peru*

# 1 Will you keep me safe?



Illustration from the Children Consultations for the 2023 Global Refugee Forum in Thailand

“Mom and Dad stayed on land, and we children went on the boat. The boat was rocking, and then people with masks came...I was afraid.”

## 2 How can I be happy when my family is not together?

- “I just want to be safe together with my family.”  
*Refugee girl, 16, from Afghanistan in Bosnia Herzegovina*
- “I am happy when I am with my family because I was separated from my father. I came with my mother. It helps when I speak with my father and grandmother on the phone every night.”  
*Refugee girl, 8, from Cuba*
- “My dream is to come back to Venezuela and see my family. I hope the global leaders consider our dreams.”  
*Refugee girl, 11, from Venezuela, in Peru*

## 3 I suffer so much racism and discrimination. Will you do something about it?

- “I would like to convey to governments that I wish that one day there will be no systemic racism, based on ethnicity, gender and religion against displaced people”  
*Refugee boy, 17, from Afghanistan, in Greece*
- “Governments should invest in refugee integration projects.”  
*Refugee boy, 16, from Afghanistan, in Greece*
- “Don’t discriminate against us. Help us to be equal. I just want people to act normal with us.”  
*Refugee boy, 10, from Afghanistan, in Bosnia and Herzegovina*
- “If we have more extracurricular activities, that would help us hang out with friends. In the Save the Children summer school, I meet a lot of friends from the local community, and sometimes we ride bikes.”  
*Refugee boy, 12, from Iraq, in Bosnia and Herzegovina*
- “It is our right to live with dignity, and we require more support to do so.”  
*Refugee child, from Palestine, in Lebanon*

## EDUCATION



“I decided to leave school because a teacher made fun of my skin condition. It made me feel ashamed and sad, so I chose not to return.”

*Refugee girl, 15, Iraq*

### GOING TO SCHOOL IS A PRIORITY FOR CHILDREN.

Violence and discrimination at school is a big problem for refugee children and a big barrier to getting an education. Children talked about their experience of being bullied by other children and discriminated against or treated badly by teachers.

They had concrete suggestions including training teachers to improve their communication and alternatives to humiliating punishment and that school and community authorities monitor these practices.

Children ask to be able to access education without discrimination and that barriers that stop them from attending, including lack of documentation, are eliminated. They ask for an education that prepares them for the future and to be provided with materials and curricula that are relevant to them. Language barriers and teacher’s lack of understanding of the culture and background of refugee children is a big problem for them.



# I do not feel safe at school. *Will you help me?*

- “Every child deserves a safe and supportive environment to learn and grow. Let’s work together to create schools where every student feels accepted and valued for who they are.”  
*Refugee child, Iraq*
- “Education works best in a place where safety and well-being are the most important things.”  
*Refugee child, from Palestine, in Lebanon*
- “They tease a child who has special needs. When they do, I go with my friends to stand for him”  
*Refugee boy, 12, from Democratic Republic of Congo*
- “Make it a requirement for all teachers to go to training on Child Rights and Student Well-being, and on how to effectively deal with and help students.”  
*Refugee child, Lebanon*
- “To prevent physical or psychological abuse, provide training for teachers and school employees on positive discipline techniques, conflict resolution, and effective communication.”  
*Refugee child, Lebanon*
- “Implement strict measures to prevent violence within schools, including a complete ban on physical punishment. Instead, use alternative disciplinary methods such as assigning grades or involving parents in addressing behavioral issues.”  
*Refugee child, Iraq*
- We need authorities that monitor the infrastructure and psychological services at schools.”  
*Refugee girl, 12, from Venezuela, in Peru*



# What will you do to make sure that what I am learning in school helps me to achieve my future goals?

- “We need school, I like to be in school. In school, I am the same as other girls.”  
*Refugee girl, 11, from Türkiye*
- “Let’s make sure all kids have books and pencils to learn and grow.”  
*Refugee girl, Iraq*
- “In Dadaab, we dream of an education that’s not just a privilege but a right. Despite crowded classrooms, we see opportunities in every challenge. We aim for a future where learning is inclusive, accessible, and empowering for every child. Let’s unite to build a brighter tomorrow through education.”  
*Refugee boy, Kenya*
- “Government should support us with schools and teachers so that together with other girls we stay in school and not married”  
*Refugee girl, 14, from South Sudan, in Uganda*
- “One of the things I want to suggest is to build an educational space in the camp. It can be anything, as long as we have something to do. Or at least to let us find a job so that we make some money to be able to do some things.”  
*Refugee boy, 15, from Afghanistan, in Greece*
- “What I want and will make me happy is to live in a safe place, go to school, and build my future so that I can help others in the country that I live and, in my country, as well”  
*Girl, 17, from Afghanistan, in Greece*
- “I just want to study and have a normal life like other children. I want to learn foreign languages.”  
*Refugee girl, 16, from Afghanistan, in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

“We ask for safety, education, and the chance to be kids, even in challenging times.”

*Refugee boy, 14, from Syria, in Iraq*



- “If I were a boss, I would make a lot of schools, buy books, I would give them a pen and tell them “I will give you a chance”. I would say everyone can study and become a doctor or engineer.”

*Refugee girl, 15, from Afghanistan, in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

- “Language proficiency is crucial. Some of us struggle to speak clearly and experience bullying as a result, which affects our self-confidence and ability to express ourselves.”

*Refugee girl, 16, from Myanmar, Karen ethnic minority, Thailand*

- “Improve educational quality by ensuring qualified teachers, especially for English language instruction.”

*Refugee child, Lebanon*

- “It is very nice when the teacher gives us homework to learn about our own country, where we came from. I like it very much”

*Refugee girl, 11, Egypt*

- “Form committees of children, parents, and staff members to monitor schools.”

*Refugee child, Lebanon*

- “The grading system is bad because if you get a 2 in some subjects, you are labelled as a “2 student” and nobody, and you can never become a successful translator in the future like I want to be. I think it should be “Great” and “Could be better” - so you are more motivated to study and not labelled as stupid.”

*Refugee boy, 14, from Ukraine, in Georgia*

- “Create student councils and involve students in school decision-making processes.”

*Refugee child, Lebanon*





**REFUGEE CHILDREN WANT OPPORTUNITIES TO FOLLOW THEIR PASSIONS AND HAVE PLACES WHERE THEY CAN PLAY AND MAKE FRIENDS AND PREPARE FOR THEIR FUTURE.**

Doing nothing and being left with no opportunities makes children feel despair and hopelessness.



“We feel useless, trapped in the same routine every day inside a besieged camp. We wake up, clean, try to go to school, do household chores, and sleep. We can’t do extracurricular activities; we do not feel safe.”

*Syrian refugee girl, Iraq*

# I dream of a better future.

## *Will you help me?*

- “Boys and girls have little sparks of light that are so small, it’s actually a talent, a goal, a wish, a dream or a hope. Help them shine and brighten the world. even if you don’t help them, don’t shut them down.”  
*Refugee boy, 15, from Afghanistan, in Bosnia and Herzegovina*
- “Can university registration fees be reduced, or could scholarships be given to ease the financial burden?”  
*Refugee child, Lebanon*
- “As young teenagers on this site, our first problem is unemployment. Not being able to go to school is also a problem; we spend our days doing nothing. In my opinion, what could help us, the young people, is if we had support to do something, go to school or learn a trade. That’s what we need”,  
*Refugee girl, 17, Niger*
- “As refugee children, we dream of a world where sports know no barriers. Limited mentors, scarce equipment, and cultural hurdles shouldn’t sideline our dreams. Let’s unite for a future where every child has a fair shot at playing and thriving in sports.”  
*Refugee boy, Kenya*
- “I drew the playground because in my home I don’t have it.”  
*Refugee boy, 7, Thailand*
- “My dream is, one day, to have lots of toys to play with. There is nothing to do here all day.” *Refugee girl, 10, Greece*
- “We don’t have internet connection here, we don’t have a school or any other activities so that we can do something creative to pass our time, we have nothing to do all day locked inside the camp. That makes us feel depressed.”  
*Refugee boy, 17, Greece*
- “We are still adapting to the new reality – the new place, new environment, new school. Having access to more afterschool activities, non-formal education opportunities that would help us to learn more about our future jobs would be amazing.”  
*Refugee girl, 12, from Ukraine, in Georgia*
- “Income generation activities can help us to be independent of men, avoid temptation and protect us from sexual assault, sexual exploitation and rape. Thanks to income generation activities we can cover our small needs and even support our parents.”  
*Refugee girl, 15, Niger*

## ACCESS TO SERVICES

**ACCESS TO SERVICES SUCH AS FOOD, HEALTHCARE, MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT, ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAMMES, TOGETHER WITH ACCESS TO DOCUMENTATION IS A CONSTANT CONCERN FOR CHILDREN IN THEIR EVERYDAY LIFE.**

Many children said they want access to mental health services because most refugee children need help but cannot access it. Many feel unhappy because they don't feel like they belong, especially when children from the local community treat them as "different." When asked what feeling happy meant for them, they often mentioned fitting in and being accepted by others.



Illustration from the Children Consultations for the 2023 Global Refugee Forum in Thailand

“I was very sick. It was night, my father took me to the hospital. They didn't ask me anything except if I had an ID card. I didn't have an ID, and they didn't help me. I cried. The worst thing is when I don't have an ID card, I can't do anything. I can't even buy a bus ticket to go to another city.”

*Refugee boy, 15*



1

I need legal status, I need an identity card. How can I have transport, how can I go to school, how can I do anything, if I do not have it? *What will you do to help me?*



- “I would ask for a better quality of procedures in the future, so displaced people can be provided with refugee status and not be traumatized by the procedures.”

*Refugee boy, 16, from Afghanistan, in Greece*

- “I think that the authorities in the country should enable us to be visible, that is, to have documents. I am now in the process of obtaining asylum. I don’t know how long that will take.”

*Refugee boy, 12, from Iraq, in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

- “Governments should respect the displaced people, and offer humane and safe facilities and services, where they will be respected no matter their country of origin.”

*Refugee boy, 17, from Afghanistan, in Greece*

“The matter of legal status is important to us. Without all the necessary documents, we face difficulties when applying for jobs, as they often require identification”

*Refugee girl, 16, in Thailand*

# Thousands of people live inside this camp, but there is only one doctor. How can he possibly help everyone stay healthy?

- “We dream of a healthy future. Limited healthcare facilities, nutrition worries, and having no specialized care challenges us. We plead for an inclusive healthcare system, with access to essential services, nutrition support, and caring doctors. Let’s build a foundation of health empowering every child to thrive.”  
*Refugee girl, Kenya*
- “We children, know a lot of things. We have passed a very difficult road. When I think of the road from Iraq to Bosnia, it is very painful. We were hungry. If someone had asked me, I would have given every child something to eat.”  
*Refugee boy, 12, from Iraq, in Bosnia and Herzegovina*
- “Make clearer rules and information on healthcare and staying healthy which everyone can find and understand easily”  
*Refugee child, Georgia*
- “Limited healthcare facilities, nutrition worries, and no specialized care are a challenge for us. We plead for an inclusive healthcare system, with access to essential services, nutrition support, and caring doctors. Let’s build a foundation of health empowering every child to thrive.”  
*Refugee girl, in Kenya*
- “We should have kitchens in the camp or be able to cook for ourselves and others staying there. The camp is far from the city, and there is lots of garbage.”  
*Refugee boy, 14, from Ukraine, in Georgia*
- “What we can suggest is to, at least, have information about the times that we have running water. Because no one tells you when the faucets are working and there are times that we are sleeping or we are somewhere else and we miss our chance to have access to water for that day and fill some buckets. Even if it only lasts for one hour a day (the running water), I just want to know what time this is.”  
*Refugee boy, 15, from Afghanistan, in Greece*
- “I would tell leaders to send food because there is a woman who is hungry.”  
*Girl, 8, Bosnia*



“Create safe spaces and provide refugee children with access to public gardens.”

*Refugee child, Lebanon*

# Why aren't governments making mental health a priority?

- “We should have the right to talk to someone responsible and report our problems”  
*Refugee boy, 15, from Somalia, in Greece*
- “Happy is when I wake up and think to go to school, study a lot, write poetry and be with my family.”  
*Refugee boy, 15, from Afghanistan, in Bosnia and Herzegovina*
- “Dancing makes me happy.”  
*Refugee boy, 16, from Burundi, in Serbia*
- “Provide cheap counselling, therapy, and psychiatric services in complete mental health care programs.”  
*Refugee child, Lebanon*
- “The most important thing for child is inner peace, nothing should hurt child's feelings.”  
*Refugee girl, 16, from Afghanistan, in Bosnia and Herzegovina*



Illustration from the Children Consultations for the 2023 Global Refugee Forum in Thailand

4

If our families cannot work or receive any help, we will end in poverty.  
*Will you help us?*

“Help our parents find jobs so we are not involved in child labour activities like digging for food in the host community, selling of charcoal and hawking food stuffs to earn money for the family”

*Refugee boy, 13, from Democratic Republic of Congo, in Uganda*



# CHILD PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

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## CHILDREN WANT TO BE LISTENED TO AND TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

They need safe spaces where they can share their views. They ask for opportunities to participate, also online, and influence decisions that affect their lives, for example on living arrangements, education, wellbeing. They have concrete proposals. They suggest that children could be helped learn about activism, campaigning and advocacy. They want to organise themselves, for example by forming child-led committees in schools; child advisory councils in camps and municipalities to raise issues to authorities but also globally to influence processes such as the Global Refugee Forum. They want to raise awareness in their communities about their rights and their needs.

GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM  
TOPICS

challenges faced by children in the camps

conclusion, for the challenges faced by children

volvement of children in decision making

CHALLENGES FACING OF RESSETI

- 1) THE economic process being large close to
- 2) Misappropriation of Refugee data for cases
- 3) Resettlement opportunities, an limited in the refugees in the camps
- 4) New immigration policies, also hinder
- 5) Due to economic hardship

Recommendation

Full training of Resettlement Process

Effective & accurate management of the refugee data

Provision of more resettlement opportunities, to the formation of standard immigration policies.

the emphasis

“In child-led advocacy activities in camps, we focused on raising awareness about important topics such as climate change and child rights”.

*Refugee child, Lebanon*



# Will you pay attention to children's needs and voices?

- “If the messages we passed on during our discussions reach the decision-makers, I think things will change.”  
*Refugee girl, 17, Niger*
- “It is important that we know what our rights are.”  
*Refugee girl, 12, from Ukraine, in Georgia*
- “I liked the discussion as well as the fact that you called us to hear what we have to say and share the struggles we are facing.”  
*Refugee boy, 15, from Afghanistan, in Greece*
- “Unless they have ever endured the war, people will never know the struggles we're facing. Why not give us an opportunity to speak out about these struggles to help them help us?”  
*Refugee boy, 14, from Ukraine, in Georgia*
- “Generate more safe spaces for girls only to express their feelings and views.”  
*Refugee girl, Peru*
- “I will help other children.”  
*Refugee girl, 8, from Afghanistan, in Bosnia and Herzegovina*
- “Include girls and adolescents in decision-making about laws that may be damaging to them.”  
*Refugee girl, 16, from Venezuela, in Peru*
- “This is the first time we have been brought together in this way to give our opinion on our situation as young people and children, and I hope that the authorities and all those who support us will listen to our requests and help us with the priorities we have set.”  
*Refugee girl, 17, Niger*
- “Create more spaces for us to participate with the certainty that we will not be discriminated against because of our birthplace, gender and other characteristics”  
*Refugee girl, 14, from Venezuela, in Peru*
- “Give children the opportunity to plan and carry out ideas in their community with other children.”  
*Refugee boy, Georgia*

“We have recognized several critical issues within our village, but articulating our concerns has proven to be challenging as our status as children often means our voices are not given due consideration.”  
*Refugee girl, 17 in Thailand.*

# 6 What will you do after the Global Refugee Forum?

**CHILDREN WANT TO BE INFORMED ABOUT DECISIONS AND WANT TO HOLD ADULTS TO ACCOUNT FOR IMPLEMENTING PLEDGES.**

▶ “Guarantee the commitment to follow up on the proposals and demands... beyond a photo”.

*Refugee girl, 16, from Venezuela, in Peru*



▶ “Establish a monitoring system to ensure the effective implementation of government pledges concerning refugees, rather than just hosting forum.”

*Refugee children’s group, Lebanon, when asked to suggest a recommendation to the GRF organizers*



▶ “Children are the future, and our dreams are full of peace, education, and endless possibilities.”

*Refugee boy, 12, Iraq*

## ABOUT THE INITIATIVE



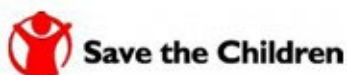
The Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts has over 30 members – including UN entities, non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, philanthropic foundations, individual experts and special procedures – united to ensure that children’s rights are central in the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

### Contact

#### CO-CHAIRS OF THE INITIATIVE

Caroline Horne  
[caroline.horne@terredeshommes.org](mailto:caroline.horne@terredeshommes.org)

Daniela Reale  
[daniela.reale@savethechildren.org](mailto:daniela.reale@savethechildren.org)



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

