

Update on the coordination efforts of UNHCR to measure the impact arising from hosting, protecting and assisting refugees

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Remarks by the Director of the Division of Resilience and Solutions,
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Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

You are all aware that forced displacement has been expanding almost constantly in the last decade. The number of people forced to flee has risen yet again. Currently, there are an estimated 110 million refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs and others in need of international protection have been forcibly displaced from their homes. War, violence, persecution, discrimination – and increasingly, climate change, often linked to conflict – all cause displacement. The majority of the 35.2 million refugees in the world live in a neighbouring country, which also implies that 76% of them are hosted in low- and middle-income countries. Within a world witnessing several simultaneous crises and significant displacement, solutions remain elusive.

It is against this global context that UNHCR is working together with Member States to coordinate the initiative on "Measuring the Impact of protecting, hosting and assisting refugees." Complementing our conference room paper on this topic, I am pleased to provide you with an update on the progress being made in this regard. I would also like to note that this process has benefited from the expertise of the World Bank (WB), the Joint Data Center (JDC) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

This work is in response to the omnibus resolution of December 2017 (A/RES/73/151) which requests UNHCR to "coordinate an effort to measure the impact arising from hosting, protecting and assisting refugees, with a view to assessing gaps in international cooperation and promoting burden- and responsibility-sharing that is more equitable, predictable and sustainable, and to begin reporting on the results to Member States in 2018".

In our coordinating role, UNHCR has convened four meetings with member states jointly with the World Bank between 2018 and 2022. In these meetings, Member States agreed to initially focus on education, providing data and agreeing to a common methodology. One outcome of these meetings is the education costing methodology led by the World Bank, which was issued in early 2022. As a result of this work the cohort-average annual cost of providing education to all refugee students in low, lower-middle and upper-middle income host countries is 4.85 billion US Dollars.

In January 2023, UNHCR, in collaboration with the World Bank and the World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Center, organized the fourth technical workshop with Member States from Geneva-based missions and capitals. The workshop, attended by 110 participants, focused on the assessment of the fiscal cost of assisting and hosting refugees in the education sector. In this meeting we provided an update and sought inputs for next steps for financing of education. The World Bank is currently refining the methodology proposed for responsibility-sharing in the education sector, incorporating comments received during the workshop. The workshop also explored potential new sectors for assessment, including shelter/housing and social assistance. Both sectors were received with interest by participants. The methodological options for the implementation of their relative fiscal cost estimation were discussed, leading to prioritization of social assistance. In this regard, the World Bank have initiated an initial desk review of a basic methodological approach to measuring the impact of the inclusion of refugees in national social protection/assistance systems. Several member states also noted their interest in looking at the health sector.

Building on this discussion, I can confirm that the next workshop will be held in Jordan in September 2023 and will seek participation from representatives from Geneva-based missions as well as colleagues from relevant line ministries at capital level to ensure a technical-level deliberation. The purpose of the workshop is twofold: to discuss the financing of education, building on the joint World Bank-UNHCR report on “The Global Cost of Inclusive Refugee Education”, and to have a technical-level discussion to develop a costing methodology for another sector.

Member States will also recall that UNHCR shared the note for the January meeting with a short survey in April, which will inform the upcoming workshop in Jordan. It will help to assess interest, priorities, and sectoral preferences. We ask Member States for their continued robust engagement to help sustain this work. We hope to get additional responses to the survey, which will allow us to plan the September workshop in accordance with member state preferences and to understand which states wish to participate. Procedurally, to take this work forward, we require the necessary support, notably engagement and data, from Member States.

We also understand that there may be some interest in briefings of regional groupings in Geneva and stand ready to do so.

Let me express UNHCR's appreciation for the valuable engagement of our partners in this process and encourage active participation of Member States in this initiative, especially as we move ahead towards the Global Refugee Forum in 2023. I look forward to responding to any questions you may have.

Thank you.