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**UNHCR coordination efforts to measure the impact of
hosting, protecting and assisting refugees**

Summary

This update details the efforts coordinated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in response to the request by the United Nations General Assembly to measure the impact of hosting, protecting and assisting refugees ([A/RES/79/156](#)). It provides a summary of developments since the inception of the work on measuring the impact, the progress achieved and next steps.

I. Introduction

1. The global number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons has now reached nearly 122 million. This staggering figure is the result of new emergencies, the protracted nature of many displacement situations and modest progress made in advancing solutions. Refugee-hosting States have long called for more recognition to their contributions to addressing the consequences of forced displacement, in the spirit of greater burden- and responsibility-sharing.
2. Drawing from the 2020 “Progress Report: Measuring the Impact of Hosting, Protecting and Assisting Refugees”, this paper details the efforts coordinated by UNHCR, with technical inputs from the World Bank and the Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement, in response to the request by the United Nations General Assembly to measure the impact of hosting, protecting and assisting refugees. It documents the approach and the advances made since the affirmation of the Global Compact on Refugees by the General Assembly in December 2018 ([A/RES/73/151](#)). It responds to the call in the Global Compact on Refugees for the process to inform stocktaking at the Global Refugee Forums held every four years, together with a mechanism for tracking the implementation of pledges and contributions supported by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
3. Efforts thus far have focused on defining how the gap between the widely recognized principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing and international practice could be measured, what mechanisms could be defined for sharing progress and how international cooperation could be made more predictable. The method of assessment of costs and the broader impact of the presence of refugees on host communities and countries, taking into account the many variables that typically characterize refugee situations, remains relevant to the exercise.
4. There is recognition that burden- and responsibility-sharing in hosting, protecting and assisting refugees needs to be more equitable and international cooperation strengthened. The majority (69 per cent) of refugees are hosted in neighbouring countries, with just a few donor countries and international financial institutions providing the bulk of financial and technical support. It is, therefore, essential to find ways to broaden the support base and promote the active engagement of a greater number of stakeholders to promote an approach that is more equitable, predictable and sustainable.

II. Objectives

5. With a shared commitment to advancing the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, a collective assessment of gaps in international cooperation can contribute to a more well-informed dialogue. The efforts to measure the impact of hosting, protecting and assisting refugees seek to quantify these gaps, appreciating that host countries make meaningful contributions to refugee-hosting situations. At the same time, quantification is only one tool to achieving this shared objective. Taking into consideration existing discernible inequalities, early action towards more equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing should not wait for a full assessment of impact and gaps.
6. With the aim of developing a common methodological approach to measure the impact of hosting, protecting and assisting refugees, UNHCR, with the technical support of the World Bank, organized numerous workshops from 2019 to 2024. Participants have included representatives from a range of Member States. Particular emphasis has been placed on ensuring a participatory process to jointly develop the methodologies.
7. This exercise sought to develop a common language of shared experiences by achieving consensus on the approach, scope and identification of methodologies for measuring the impact, which may be suitable for broad application to create momentum for practical commitments made at the Global Refugee Forums in 2019 and 2023.

III. Achievements to date

8. A key achievement was reaching agreement on a phased, multi-year approach that emphasized participation and practicality. The voluntary nature of participation in the process aimed to involve as many host countries as possible. It was agreed that a practical approach was required to ensure simplicity and transparency in the proposed methodologies while: (a) maintaining quality standards; (b) relying on official and cross-referenced data sources, wherever possible; and (c) recognizing the need for adaptations where necessary for comparability.

9. The workshops held in 2019 identified and examined different sectors and their complexity for assessing impact in the short-, medium- and long-term. It was agreed to start with the more easily quantifiable, though nevertheless considerable task of assessing fiscal costs, with a focus on education, as a basis for the discussion of challenges and opportunities related to potential methodologies. Participants recognized that translating the provisions of the Global Compact on Refugees into action comes with practical challenges that include, among others, the need for capacity-building with the necessary resources to aggregate required data, improved coordination and engagement with involved partners, and a methodology and strategy for the management of resources and reporting.

10. Based on the discussions held during the workshops in 2019, the World Bank, together with UNHCR, developed a methodology for measuring the cost of the inclusion of refugees in host countries' national education systems. The findings were presented to Member States in February 2022, and UNHCR and the World Bank invited host States to use the methodology in order to measure the costs of including refugees in their national education systems. The methodology was also highlighted at a side event during the World Bank's annual spring meeting in 2022.

11. At the meeting in February 2022, Member States expressed appreciation for the efforts undertaken thus far, including the methodological work of the World Bank and UNHCR in the education sector and the final report. At the same time, they underscored the need to develop methodologies for other sectors, such as health. UNHCR and the World Bank suggested housing and social protection as other possible sectors for consideration.

12. In January 2023, UNHCR, in collaboration with the World Bank and the Joint Data Center, organized the fourth technical workshop with representatives of Member States from Geneva-based missions and capitals. The workshop's main objectives were the following: (a) taking stock of progress on the assessment of the fiscal cost of assisting and hosting refugees in the education sector and proposing a way forward for responsibility-sharing; and (b) proposing a potential new sector for assessment (shelter, housing or basic needs) and discussing methodological options for the implementation of their relative fiscal cost estimation. The idea of expanding the fiscal costing exercise to basic needs was received with interest, and it was agreed that a draft methodology would be developed and presented at the next workshop. Member States requested that the health sector also be prioritized for costing, and it was agreed that a draft methodology for this sector be developed and presented at the next workshop.

13. UNHCR organized the fifth workshop with Member States on 30 November and 1 December 2023. The workshop took place in a hybrid format, with 35 participants from Geneva-based missions and capitals. The workshop focused on major spending categories in three target sectors: education, health and basic needs, and lessons learned from the costing exercise on education that could be applied to the sectors of health and basic needs were leveraged. Draft methodologies for the three target sectors were presented for feedback from Member States.

14. During the fifth workshop, delegations voiced the need for a flexible methodology, including for those countries with policies that do not support the inclusion of refugees in national services. Evidence showing that creating parallel services for refugees is not efficient and can limit benefits to host communities was also discussed. Furthermore, Member States agreed that having a standard global cost for different sectors could be a useful comparative tool when communicating needs to donors. Participants recognized the need to move forward on two fronts: (a) developing a global methodology with a focus on fiscal costs; and

(b) designing country-level approaches that can broaden the scope to incorporate economic, social and fiscal costs.

15. On 22 and 23 May 2024, UNHCR organized the sixth workshop in Nairobi with Member States from Geneva-based missions and capitals. Noting that there were three large spending categories that present the greatest fiscal costs for governments, the workshop focused on health and subsistence needs, in follow up to the previous workshops that focused on education.¹ The aims of the sixth workshop were to validate the methodologies applied in each case and offer closure to this global exercise with a view to concrete opportunities to extend the approaches to the country level.

16. At the sixth workshop, the draft reports on the cost of inclusion in national health systems and meeting refugees' subsistence needs were presented to participants for initial feedback. Additionally, a presentation was given illustrating examples from Chad and Jordan of the application of the global framework at the country level. The country level costings were shown to be able to incorporate more parameters beyond simply recurrent costs, including investments and other indirect costs for the host community. The importance of a government-led process was emphasized in order to ensure that the analysis and findings are relevant to the policy dialogues occurring at the national level and also support resource mobilization with the international community.

17. The draft reports on inclusion in national health systems and meeting refugees' subsistence needs were finalized by UNHCR and the World Bank, incorporating feedback received following the sixth technical workshop.

18. In November 2024, a dedicated page on the UNHCR global website was launched containing all materials developed as part of the measuring the impact initiative.² The web page includes the three separate global costing exercises focusing on education, health and subsistence needs, as well as dashboards that allow readers to manipulate the underlying data sets used for each report.

19. The reports' findings have been disseminated widely in both UNHCR and the World Bank, as well as across relevant stakeholders within the international community. The insights derived from the analyses have influenced the shift in UNHCR towards sustainable responses, which emphasize self-reliance and the inclusion of refugees in national systems.

IV. Next steps

20. Following the completion of the global costing exercises, it was agreed to explore where the global costing methodology could be extended to the country level in order to include other country-specific economic and social costs within the agreed costing framework. The methodology for the country level costings may be refined with inputs from relevant national stakeholders and to take account of national policies.

21. The dedicated web page includes three case studies from Chad, Jordan and Uganda, where data availability allows for a detailed costing analysis at the country level. Additional country-level examples have been developed by the World Bank in the case of Ethiopia and the Niger. These examples serve as inspiration for official country costing exercises upon the request of Member States.

22. UNHCR and the World Bank, in collaboration with the Joint Data Center, stand ready to respond to official requests for support to implement country costing exercises. As emphasized during the course of the technical workshops, third party data may be applied to the global costing exercise to ensure cross-country comparison and credibility.

¹ The full report, "The Global Cost of Inclusive Refugee Education" and the 2023 update are available on both the UNHCR global website and the World Bank website.

² See <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/reports-and-publications/measuring-impact-hosting-protecting-and-assisting-refugees>

23. During the technical workshops it was routinely highlighted that ongoing engagement with Member States on the measuring the impact initiative could present opportunities to link country-costed plans with donor financing and other financing approaches. Further discussions with Member States will continue on how to clearly link costing with financing in each sector.
