

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,

I have the pleasure to provide an update to the work we at UNHCR have been leading over the years – together with partners at the World Bank (WB) and the Joint Data Center for Forced Displacement (JDC) and the active engagement of Member States – to measure the impact of hosting, protecting, and assisting refugees.

As advised in the 2017 Omnibus Resolution, UNHCR was requested 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.”

You will recall that in our role as coordinator, UNHCR convened six technical workshops between 2019 and 2024. These workshops brought together Member States’ representatives from capitals and Geneva to guide the underlying focus of the initiative, along with the development of acceptable methodologies for global costing exercises. Your engagement in these workshops as well as other forums has been instrumental in shaping the direction of our work and ensure a participatory process.

To date, the measuring the impact initiative has resulted in three separate global costing exercises focused on the spending categories that present the greatest fiscal cost for hosting governments: education, health, and subsistence needs. The reports for each can now be found on a dedicated page on the UNHCR global website that was launched in November of last year. In addition, all associated material is published on that site, including dashboards that allow interested audiences to manipulate the publicly available datasets used for each report.

To recap the high-level findings of these global costing exercises:

- The global costing exercise for **education**, initially published in 2021 and updated for the Global Refugee Forum in December 2023, offers a comprehensive look at the financial requirements for including refugee students in national education systems. The estimated annual cost is \$9.3 billion for low- and middle-income host countries; however, just \$309 million is needed in low-income countries, demonstrating that closing the financing gap and providing education to refugees is not only necessary but also within reach.
- The global costing analysis for including refugees in national **health** services finds that the annual global cost to provide health services to refugees through national systems is approximately US\$11 billion per year. Notably, the cost in low-income countries is much lower, at around US\$239 million. Prioritizing support to these low-income countries could advance a significant part of the global refugee inclusion agenda.
- Finally, the findings coming out of the report on the cost of meeting refugees' **subsistence needs** is especially relevant considering the current climate of limited resources. The analysis shows that strengthening refugees' economic participation and easing encampment policies or restrictions on movement result in substantial savings to humanitarian assistance. In contexts in which refugees have the earning opportunities as host nationals, the amount required in assistance would fall by US\$16 billion per year. The takeaway message is that policies supporting refugee economic participation deliver a "triple win": boosting refugee earnings and reducing poverty, reducing the burden of assistance on host countries and donors, and mobilizing additional developmental aid for host countries to the benefit of both host communities and refugees.

Now that the global costing exercises are complete, it was agreed on with Member States representatives at the workshop in Nairobi that the next critical step is to bring this work down to the country level. These country-level analyses will support government-led processes around transitioning to more sustainable and cost-effective refugee-hosting approaches and would allow for a more grounded discussion on global burden-sharing and financing support from the international community.

I wish to highlight that UNHCR and the World Bank continue to work closely together to leverage much-needed financing as a result of this workstream. For example for inclusion of refugee education, the WB's Education Global Practice, FCDO and UNHCR on INSPIRE, the technical assistance facility between the Bank and UNHCR which delivers technical assistance to leverage and design WHR education support. To date, INSPIRE has been rolled

out in 15 countries globally and has leveraged \$1.1 billion in Window for Host Communities and Refugees financing in Burundi, Chad, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. Strong commitment was reiterated, with FCDO hoping to fund the next phase toward a shared vision on sustainable responses.

Some country chapters have already been elaborated by the World Bank, where publicly available data allows, which were presented at the Nairobi workshop and feature on the dedicated website previously mentioned. The examples of Chad and Jordan illustrate how the global costing framework could be applied at the country level, with context-specific variations. For instance:

- In Chad, the chapter recognizing the progressive refugee-hosting policies the government has enacted, explores the economic rationale for including refugees in local economies and the benefits it would bring to refugees, , the people of Chad and the international community, thus creating the aforementioned “triple win.” In short, dedicated financing, and opportunities to allow Sudanese refugees to participate in the economy to the is estimated to reduce refugee poverty and reduce the annual cost of assistance.
- In Jordan, the WB’s report looks at the fiscal and welfare benefits of economic participation by Syrian refugees. As a starting point, the government’s policy approach that allows refugees to work is estimated to generate substantial savings, which would free up resources for investments in development priorities for host communities and the country in general.

These country chapters demonstrate the value of more localized considerations to inform the unique policy discussions taking place in each refugee-hosting setting. They also show how the global costing framework developed as part of this initiative can be extended to account for other relevant parameters beyond recurrent costs, such as investments and spillovers.

As we advance the strategic shift towards a sustainable response approach – one that places emphasis on refugees’ self-reliance and inclusion in national systems – it becomes ever more critical to have on hand evidence that shapes a well-informed policy dialogue on hosting refugees, and clearly recognizes the contributions of refugee-hosting nations themselves.

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We reiterate our call to Member States to communicate interest in UNHCR and WB support to develop these country-level costing exercises, noting that some Member States have already done so, and we are exploring the options given the data availability. Together, we look forward to additional requests to build on the technical work advanced so far.

Lastly, allow me to express again UNHCR's deep appreciation for Member States and partners' valuable engagement and active participation throughout this initiative.

Thank you.