

Measuring the impact arising from hosting, protecting and assisting refugees 1st Workshop, February 12-13, 2019, Geneva

Summary of discussions and agreements

Background

The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) has placed enhanced responsibility-sharing at the center of the international protection agenda. The GCR is proposing specific measures toward that goal, including a proposal by a number of refugee-hosting countries to measure and “map” their contributions¹.

The objective of this exercise is to provide data that can underpin discussions among Member States that could eventually lead to a more equitable, predictable and sustainable responsibility-sharing arrangement, that is not limited to financial responsibility-sharing alone. Three elements are envisaged as part of the “measuring contributions” exercise:

- (i) A measure of contributions by “donor” countries, with a consistent methodology, led by OECD.
- (ii) A measure of contributions by “hosting” countries, with a consistent methodology, coordinated by UNHCR with some technical assistance from the World Bank.
- (iii) A metric that would measure the way contributions are distributed across Member States.

As part of the effort to measure the contributions of “hosting” countries, the first of a series of workshops was held in Geneva on February 12 and 13, 2019, facilitated by UNHCR.

Workshop objectives

The objectives of the workshop(s), as agreed by participants from hosting countries, was to develop a common methodology or tool to measure the impact of hosting, protecting and assisting refugees. As articulated by a participant, the objective of these workshops is to come together to develop a common language and practical tool to tell our different stories.

This objective will be achieved through a transparent, participatory process, led by hosting countries. There is need for a consensus as there is no commonly accepted, comprehensive methodology. Any methodology that is adopted will rest on a set of assumptions and agreed approaches, is likely to use proxies, omit some aspects, and rely on incomplete data sets.

The set of workshops will define a homogenous approach across countries using existing data sources where possible. The approach and methodology will be iterated, reviewed and improved over time.

Summary of discussions

Participants shared their hopes, fears and desired outcomes from this process

Key points:

Hopes: To find a common methodology to measure both costs and benefits that can be adapted to local realities and captures the broader effects on the economy. That this exercise is useful, translates

¹ Global Compact on Refugees – paragraph 48.

meaningfully into enhanced responsibility sharing, enhances national data collection and use and has strong host country participation.

Fears: That the issue is too complex as it is hard to establish causalities and measure impacts especially in the Medium/Long term. That the big picture of better burden sharing is missed and insufficient account may be taken of national differences, sensitivities and concerns. That existing data is insufficient and there is limited local capacity to produce it.

Desired outcomes: A clear path forward towards more equitable burden and responsibility sharing. A better understanding not just of costs, but context and the implications of policies. A shared understanding and common framework. A report that builds the foundations for a transparent and constructive dialogue at the first Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in December 2019.

The discussions on the afternoon of Day 1 were anchored on a hypothetical scenario allowing participants to think through the main cost drivers associated with responding to a refugee influx in the immediate term. Participants collaboratively identified key cost areas, as well as mitigating and critical factors that influence these costs, and potential sources of data to quantify these immediate needs. A sector-level assessment exercise was undertaken for a few key cost areas (health, education and water) in this hypothetical scenario, as well as a brief discussion of medium- and longer- term impacts.

Day 2 discussions began with a recap of key insights from the day 1 working sessions. There was broad agreement among participants that while complex, such a contribution measuring exercise was feasible, at least when limited to the short term. Participants expressed concern that certain types of costs (such as risks to security and social cohesion) may be difficult to quantify but must be taken into account, and that the discussions had not yet touched upon some of the more complex (positive and negative) economic impacts on jobs, prices and housing or of the capital costs being accrued in the medium-long term scenario.

Working sessions on Day 2 shifted emphasis to some of these more complex channels of impact in the medium-long term. By working through a set of alternate scenarios, participants identified the main areas of potential impact, the channels through which these may be manifested, and the key role of hosting country policies and donor assistance in the scale of these impacts.

The discussions on the afternoon of Day 2 focused on agreeing on a path forward and concrete next steps, which are summarized below.

Summary of agreements

There was an agreement to focus on: i) contributions of the host countries (excluding those supported through donor contributions), defined as additional fiscal costs (including systems to mitigate broader economic/social costs) attributable to refugees' presence only (excluding for instance, the broader costs of a neighboring conflict, or those caused or potentially mitigated by hosting government policies), and ii) areas/sectors of highest impact.

It was agreed that these contributions could be classified into the following broad typologies, which may require different methodological approaches to quantify:

- (i) Service delivery including health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene, energy
- (ii) Economic activity including economic growth, unemployment, jobs, prices for goods and housing
- (iii) Social cohesion, security and environmental impacts
- (iv) Direct contributions of the hosting county such as land donations, free electricity etc.

The participants agreed to focus, over the next 6 months, on service delivery sectors beginning with education and health, with the objective of informing the discussions on responsibility sharing at the first

GRF. Based on the discussions at the 1st workshop, the World Bank will develop and share a template for quantifying these service delivery sector impacts, which participants will use as the basis for consultations with national stakeholders. These stakeholder discussions could be supported by UNHCR as needed and requested. The 2nd workshop, scheduled for 24-25th April 2019 (to be confirmed), will finalize the template for education and health, which will then be populated by hosting country representatives, and discussed at the next workshop, tentatively scheduled for June 2019.

ANNEX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

ANNEX 2: WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS