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High Commissioner's Programme**

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**Measuring the impact of hosting, protecting and assisting
refugees***Summary*

This progress report details the efforts coordinated by UNHCR in response to the request by the United Nations General Assembly to measure the impact of hosting, protecting and assisting refugees (A/Res/76/143). It provides an update of developments since the previous report was presented to the seventy-fifth meeting of the Standing Committee in 2019 (EC/70/SC/CRP.14), as well as the oral updates presented at the seventy-eighth meeting in 2020 and the eighty-first meeting of the Standing Committee in 2021.

Contents

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	1-4	3
II. Objectives.....	5-7	3
III. Achievements	8-12	4
IV. Next steps	13-15	5

I. Introduction

1. The global number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons (IDPs) has now passed 100 million. This staggering figure should be seen in the context of the protracted nature of many displacement situations and modest progress made in advancing solutions. Refugee-hosting States have long drawn attention to the lack of recognition given to their contributions to addressing the consequences of forced displacement, emphasizing the need for greater burden- and responsibility-sharing.¹

2. Drawing from the 2020 “Progress Report: Measuring the Impact of Hosting, Protecting and Assisting Refugees”, this paper details the efforts coordinated by UNHCR in response to the request by the United Nations General Assembly to measure the impact of hosting, protecting and assisting refugees. In particular, it records the approach and the advances made since the affirmation by United Nations Member States of the Global Compact on Refugees in December 2018 (A/Res/73/151). It responds also to the requirement in the Global Compact on Refugees that the process coordinated by UNHCR to measure the impact arising from hosting, protecting and assisting refugees should inform the stocktaking at the Global Refugee Forum, together with a mechanism for tracking implementation of pledges and contributions.²

3. Whereas the principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing has met with broad acceptance, it has not yet been matched by international practice.³ Efforts thus far have focused on defining how gaps could be measured, what mechanisms could be defined for sharing progress and how international cooperation could be made more predictable. A considerable debate has been generated about how the costs and broader impact of the presence of refugees on host communities could be assessed, taking into account the many variables that typically characterize refugee situations.

4. There is, however, broad recognition that burden- and responsibility-sharing in hosting, protecting and assisting refugees has so far been inequitable and that there are important gaps in international cooperation. The large majority (85 per cent) of refugees are hosted by just 15 countries; and only a few donor countries provide the bulk of financial and technical support. Host countries take on the greatest burden, as repeatedly acknowledged by UNHCR and recognized in the Global Compact on Refugees. Not only should the absolute number of refugees hosted be considered, but also their number as compared to the hosting population, as well as in the ability of States to host refugees based on differences in level of development, economic growth and local and regional contexts. It is, therefore, essential to find ways to broaden the support base and enlist the active engagement of a greater number of stakeholders to promote burden-sharing that is more equitable, predictable and sustainable.

II. Objectives

5. Central to efforts to measure the impact of hosting, protecting and assisting refugees is the shared recognition of the importance of international cooperation for refugee protection and the need for additional States and stakeholders to contribute to easing the pressure on host countries. To encourage an increase in burden-sharing, host countries can also contribute

¹ The United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/72/150 from 2017, paragraph 20, 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”.

² Global Compact on Refugees, paragraph 103.

³ One helpful articulation of the importance of the principle of burden- and responsibility sharing can be found in paragraph 8 of the December 2001 Declaration of States Parties to the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees: “...respect by States for their protection responsibilities towards refugees is strengthened by international solidarity involving all members of the international community...and the refugee protection regime is enhanced through committed international cooperation in a spirit of solidarity and effective responsibility and burden-sharing among States”.

meaningfully by planning and evaluating efficient and effective responses to address the needs of host communities and refugees. With a shared commitment to advancing the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, a collective assessment of gaps in international cooperation can make a significant contribution, but quantifiable data and evidence are needed. 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 approach to measure the impact of hosting, protecting and assisting refugees, UNHCR, with the technical support of the World Bank, organized three workshops in February, April and November 2019. Participants included representatives from a range of Member States (both refugee-hosting and donor countries) from Geneva-based missions and capitals. Particular emphasis was laid on a participatory process to develop the methodologies jointly.

7. This exercise sought to develop a “common language” of shared experiences by achieving consensus on the approach(es), scope and identification of methodologies which may be suitable for broad application to create momentum for practical commitments made at the first Global Refugee Forum.

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 hosting 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 that were 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, but nevertheless considerable task of assessing fiscal costs, with a focus on education, as a basis for the discussion of challenges and opportunities of potential methodologies. Participants recognized that translating the provisions in the Global Compact on Refugees into action comes with practical challenges that include, among others, the need for capacity building with necessary resources to aggregate required data, improved coordination and engagement of involved partners and the need for a methodology and strategy on the management of resources and reporting.

10. As also referenced in the 2020 progress report, in addition to challenges related to process, implementation and accountability, participants acknowledged there were important technical issues that required further reflection. For a range of areas within the scope of the exercise, including, for instance, the impact of hosting refugees on local labour markets, prices and services, the nature of refugee influxes does not allow for a valid comparison scenario against one without refugee presence. Furthermore, since refugee influxes are often accompanied by macro-economic or economy-wide shocks and spillovers from neighbouring conflicts, these effects are difficult to disentangle from those associated with refugee emergencies. Beyond these challenges, evaluating the impact of sectors such as infrastructure requires accounting for long-term planning and capital.

11. The World Bank developed a methodology for measuring the cost of the inclusion of refugees in host countries’ national education systems ([World Bank, 2021](#)). The findings were presented to Member States in February 2022, and UNHCR and the World Bank invited hosting States to use this methodology to measure the costs of including refugees in their national education system.

12. Member States expressed appreciation for the work done thus far, including the methodological work of the World Bank and UNHCR in the education sector and the final report. They also, however, noted that although the methodological work on education is a

good start, it represents only part of the overall burden- and responsibility-sharing and suggested similar analysis of some other sectors.

IV Next steps

13. With regard to the next steps, at the presentation of the education methodology in February 2022, it was proposed to create a working group with interested Member States to guide further work in the education sector. This working group would support country-level case studies using the education methodology to support the development of costed national inclusive education plans and provide iterative feedback on the fiscal responsibility-sharing model. An invitation will be extended and UNHCR and the World Bank encourage Member States, in particular those hosting refugees to join this group. As part of the working group, the World Bank will present some preliminary ideas on the development of a fiscal responsibility sharing framework for the education sector.

14. Furthermore, the Joint Data Center offered to prepare a short document to facilitate the discussion on the theme of shelter and housing. The document will take stock of existing evidence and could serve as a starting point for a more comprehensive analysis.

15. In response to the request by Member States to conduct a planning exercise for the next few years, UNHCR and the World Bank propose to organize a meeting to discuss a workplan to move the agenda of measuring the impact forward. However, this can only be achieved with the active participation of Member States.
