

**Seventy-eighth meeting of the Standing Committee  
7-9 July 2020**

**Agenda item 3 (b)**

**Oral update on UNHCR's coordination efforts to measure the  
impact arising from hosting, protecting and assisting refugees**

**Introduction**

1. Since early 2018, UNHCR has coordinated an initiative to measure the impact of protecting, hosting and assisting refugees with the aim of securing more equitable and sustainable burden- and responsibility-sharing.<sup>1</sup> The preliminary phase was devoted to identifying critical issues to be addressed and agreeing upon the scope of the exercise. In December 2018, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) made a valuable contribution towards the initiative in the form of the first-ever [report](#) on official development assistance (ODA) to support refugee and host populations in host countries by Development Assistance Committee (DAC) member States.

2. During the course of 2019, UNHCR convened a series of technical workshops with participants from refugee-hosting States, donor countries and international organizations. The overall purpose was to identify and agree upon approaches and supporting methodologies to capture the contributions of refugee-hosting States, quantify the support of donor countries and organizations, and devise a metric to measure progress towards more equitable burden-sharing. The principal achievements of the process so far and indicative orientations for future follow-up are outlined below, subject to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation.

**Achievements in 2019**

3. In 2019, UNHCR convened three technical workshops with the support and facilitation of the World Bank to devise options and methodologies to capture the costs and contributions of refugee-hosting States in February, April and November 2019. Their main outcomes were presented during a panel discussion at the first Global Refugee Forum (GRF), held in December 2019, and were compiled in a summary progress report.

4. As outlined in the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) (GCR), measuring the impact arising from hosting, protecting and assisting refugees is one of three processes aimed at informing stakeholders of progress towards greater burden- and responsibility-sharing, the others being the tracking of pledges and contributions made at the GRF, and the collection and analysis of data through the GCR indicator framework.<sup>2</sup> In order to help the stocktaking at the GRF, the measuring impact process focused initially on building shared understanding and collective ownership among participants.

5. At the conclusion of the first workshop, participants agreed that the scope of the exercise should focus initially on the additional fiscal costs of hosting refugees and on sectors such as education and health where reliable data could most easily be identified. During the second workshop, participants focused primarily on the application of two possible costing methodologies, one using an average *per capita* approach, the other applying a more detailed, needs-based process. Participants agreed that the average costs approach was easier to apply, but could overlook the specific additional requirements of refugees. Some participating States committed to exploring costs of education and to present the findings at the third workshop. A discussion of how to evaluate impact on the basis of establishing a counterfactual (i.e. what would have happened had there been no refugee arrivals) revealed the overall complexities of such an exercise.

6. At the third workshop, participants reviewed the advantages and disadvantages of the two methodologies and discussed the draft report on the global costs of refugee education prepared by the World Bank. Several States contributed findings from their own research of fiscal costs incurred in the education sector. They also benefitted from the presentation of a regional approach to quantifying fiscal costs generated by refugee populations carried out in several Central American States. There was consensus that the process could benefit from the convening

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 20 of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution [A/RES/72/150](#) on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, adopted on 19 December 2017, requesting 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;”.

<sup>2</sup> Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), paragraph 103.

of similar exercises at national or, possibly, regional level in the future and that a pilot impact evaluation could be explored. These exchanges permitted the elaboration of the main points of agreement for the draft progress report that were subsequently shared during the panel discussion at the GRF.

### **Follow-up**

7. The achievements of the initial phase of what will require a multi-year endeavour include: (i) securing agreement on the key elements of the methodology; (ii) specifying the practical scope and focus of the exercise; (iii) determining the range and implication of institutional engagement required, especially for data collection and analysis; (iv) establishing an understanding of the specific requirements for an impact evaluation; and (v) reaching a consensus on how the effort may best be pursued in future, notably in relation to the emphasis on concentrating attention, henceforth, at the country and regional levels.

8. Participants voiced support for the continuation of the exercise in 2020 with the inclusion of an additional sector, namely health, being indicated as a possible focus in the future. Strong interest was also expressed for the convening of workshops at regional and country level. It was noted that the latter would prove particularly helpful in bringing together all relevant ministries and departments that could contribute data, knowledge and insights from both national and local perspectives. Finally, while acknowledging its inherent complexities, some participants also suggested conducting a detailed impact evaluation.

9. During the first quarter of 2020, planning for the follow-up process envisaged the scheduling of an initial review workshop with the aim of finalizing plans for assessing the costs in the health sector and agreeing upon a series of regional and country level exercises. Nonetheless, implementation has been severely disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the consequences of which are still unfolding. Work on this initiative is expected to resume in the second half of 2020 as soon as conditions allow. An initial proposal will be to schedule a virtual meeting of interested stakeholders to take stock and identify how best to prioritize future activities.