

**Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme**

Distr.: Restricted
10 June 2024

Original: English and French

**Standing Committee
Ninetieth meeting**

**Update on measuring 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/78/184](#)). It provides a summary of developments since the inception of the work on measuring the impact and summarizes the outcomes of the fifth workshop with States, which took place on 30 November and 1 December 2023.

I. Introduction

1. The global number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons has now surpassed 108 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.
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 by United Nations Member States of the Global Compact on Refugees in December 2018 (A/RES/73/151). It responds to the requirement in the Global Compact on Refugees that the process should 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. Whereas the principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing has met with broad acceptance, it has not yet been matched by international practice. 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 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.
4. There is 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 (over 70 per cent) of refugees are hosted by neighbouring countries; 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. The ability of States to host refugees should take into account varying levels 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 of the work on measuring the impact

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. This approach recognizes that host countries make meaningful contributions 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, though quantifiable data and evidence are also 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 methodological 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 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 Forum in 2019.

III. Achievements through January 2023

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 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 on Forced Displacement, 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.

IV. Summary of the fifth workshop

13. In collaboration with the World Bank and the Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement, 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. An online poll conducted during the workshop revealed that delegations wished to see: (a) more data to inform policy choices; (b) clear and credible methodology guidelines to expand the costing exercise to other contexts; (c) practical solutions to effectively and sustainably support refugees and their host communities; (d) the identification of host countries which are interested in taking on country-level work in the target sectors of education, health and basic needs; (e) roadmaps for the three thematic sectors that are matched by responsibility-sharing commitments from the international community; (f) an agreement on clear next steps and sectors; (g) an opportunity for governments to share experiences on the costs incurred; (h) input from Member States on the initial methodology and design of a roadmap to agree upon methodologies on measuring the cost of inclusion of refugees in the health and basic needs; and, (i) methodologies that lend themselves to protracted situations and varying country contexts. Furthermore, some Member States wished to ensure that infrastructure costs for services, such as water delivery, new roads, schools and hospitals, were taken into account when costing the inclusion of refugees in the three target sectors.

15. Member States also expressed concern for the linking of the costing plans to financing. Limited donor financing and the lack of services in the target sectors within host communities posed difficulties for Member States to offset the rising costs of including refugees, while balancing the need to improve the level of services for nationals.

16. Delegations also 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. Member States 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.

17. Member States expressed the need for continued dialogue at country and regional levels and ongoing engagement on the measuring the impact initiative, with the opportunity to present country-costed plans to donors and other additional approaches that link costs with donor financing. It was agreed that the development of global costings for the health and basic needs sectors should move forward swiftly in the following six months.

18. “The Global Cost of Inclusive Refugee Education” report issued in 2021¹ reflects the agreed methodology among Member States on the global costing of education of refugees and was the culmination of discussions following the three workshops in 2019. The updated methodology was revised in follow-up to the two workshops in 2023, taking into consideration an increase in the number of refugees since the report’s publication. A revised report, “Developing a Methodology for Measuring the Impact of Hosting, Protecting, and Assisting Refugees (Phase II) – The Global Cost of Inclusive Refugee Education: 2023 Update”,² was subsequently circulated to Member States in December 2023.

19. For the basic needs sector, a detailed approach was presented during the fifth workshop. The World Bank offered to provide a country-level costing exercise for countries upon request, and Member States expressed concern over the ambitious goal that eliminating poverty among refugees would represent.

¹ The full report, “The Global Cost of Inclusive Refugee Education”, is available on both the UNHCR global website and the World Bank website.

² The full report, “Developing a Methodology for Measuring the Impact of Hosting, Protecting, and Assisting Refugees (Phase II) – The Global Cost of Inclusive Refugee Education: 2023 Update”, is available on the World Bank website.

20. Regarding the health sector, Member States reflected on the challenges of monitoring exact costs and outcomes for refugees who are already included in national health systems, as data do not currently disaggregate between refugees and the local population.

21. Of particular note at the fifth workshop was the presentation by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran of their costed plan for hosting refugees, a cost-sharing model comprising a government contribution of 85 per cent and a contribution of 15 per cent from refugees. This model closely aligns with the three target sectors of education, health and basic needs that have been prioritized by Member States for this initiative.

V. Next steps

22. The World Bank and UNHCR have asked Member States to provide technical comments on the basic needs and health methodologies in order to incorporate the information discussed at the fifth workshop. Member States suggested a period of testing for these global methodologies in-country.

23. The World Bank and UNHCR, together with Member States, have agreed to finalize the methodologies for costing of the basic needs and health sectors in order to facilitate an annual global exercise in costing the three target sectors of education, health and basic needs. The World Bank offered to provide country-level analysis for countries that request it for basic needs and noted that a formal request should be submitted to the World Bank Country Management Unit in the relevant country. Furthermore, it was suggested that third party data be applied to the global costing exercise to ensure cross-country comparison and credibility.

24. Member States highlighted the need to continue to engage on the measuring the impact initiative and to organize donor conferences where Member States could present their country-costed plans or other additional financing approaches. Further discussions with Member States on how to better link costing with financing in each sector costed will follow.

25. UNHCR, together with the World Bank, organized the sixth technical workshop with Member States on 22 and 23 May 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya with a view to presenting the revised basic needs and health methodologies. The objective of the workshop was to validate the refined global costing methodologies as well as to identify opportunities to extend these approaches to specific country-level cases. A summary of the workshop will be given to the Standing Committee at its ninetieth meeting.
