

**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,
Mr. Sajjad Malik

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

90th meeting

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Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past few years, we have been working together to measure the impact of hosting, protecting, and assisting refugees as outlined in the December 2017 omnibus resolution. The resolution 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 our coordinating role, UNHCR has convened six workshops and organized meetings with member states jointly with the World Bank (WB) and the Joint Data Centre for Forced Displacement (JDC) between 2019 and 2024. Many member states took part in six dedicated workshops, and your engagement in the different forums has been instrumental in shaping the direction of our work. As the recent workshop was held this May, we were unable to include a summary of the discussions in the Conference Room paper. As such, I will provide you with an update during this intervention.

At the 2023 July Standing Committee meeting, in your statements, you highlighted several key points:

1. Firstly, it was suggested to expand the number of sectors covered and the emphasis on accelerating the work to be able to support the discussion on gaps in international cooperation and promoting burden-and responsibility-sharing.
2. Secondly, you stressed that quantifying the costs of hosting, protecting, and assisting refugees is only the first step. There is a pressing need for financing to address identified gaps. You called for broadening multi-stakeholder engagement to intensify burden- and responsibility-sharing, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees and in the lead-up to the Global Refugee Forum.

3. Thirdly, building off the current global approach you highlighted the need to develop national costings considering the specific context of hosting countries. You also stressed the importance of engaging host countries in the development of the methodology.
4. Lastly, Member states asked about the possibility of one or two more regional workshops.

This framed the basis of our work over the last 12 months.

We first held small group meetings with the Africa Group, the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and others to unpack priorities and concerns further. This was followed by two important workshops in the past year.

In December 2023, we held the fifth workshop for measuring impact with Member States from Geneva-based missions and their capitals. It was supported by our partners at the World Bank and the World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Centre for Forced Displacement. During this workshop, Member States agreed to expand the focus from education to include health and basic needs. These areas were identified based on data from major refugee-hosting countries such as Turkey, Jordan, Pakistan, and Ethiopia, which showed that health and basic needs account for the majority of fiscal costs borne by host governments.

In May this year, we held the sixth workshop in Nairobi. Here, we presented the findings from the global costing analysis for health and basic needs for feedback and validation.

Now, let's turn our attention to the progress we've made.

1. The global costing exercise **for education** has enabled us to make some of our biggest strides, moving from a costing exercise to starting to build financing solutions. A key highlight of this progress is the "Global Cost of Inclusive Refugee Education" report, led by the World Bank. First released in early 2021 and updated for the Global Refugee Forum in December 2023, this report provides a comprehensive financial picture. It estimates that the annual cost of providing education to all refugee students in low- and middle-income host countries is \$9.3 billion.

While this is a significant figure, this cost is \$309 million in low-income countries, showing that closing the financing gap is feasible. This demonstrates that closing the financing gap is necessary and achievable. The report has supported the refugee inclusion pledge at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum. In line with this pledge, efforts have been made to develop a new technical assistance mechanism called INSPIRE, supported by FCDO and partners, including the World Bank, to develop and implement multi-year, predictable financing approach.

2. **Now, turning to health.** In the Nairobi workshop in May 2024, we presented initial findings from the global costing analysis for inclusion in health services. Based on data from the WHO Global Health Expenditure Database, the estimated global cost of providing health services to refugees through national systems is around US\$11 billion per year. We see

that the cost is much lower in low-income countries, at approximately US\$239 million. This shows the significant impact that can be achieved with relatively limited resources.

We have seen positive examples of supporting health inclusion that we should continue to support. For example, in Kenya, refugees have been included in the national health insurance scheme, and health facilities in refugee settlements have been accredited. This has been supported by strengthening the health system, including contributions from the private sector, such as the World Diabetes Foundation. As a result, both refugees and host communities have seen improved access to and quality of care. The costing exercise on health will support the GRF Multi Stakeholder pledge on Health Inclusion and System Strengthening.

3. For **basic or subsistence needs**, which constitutes a major component of cost of hosting refugees, the draft report developed by the World Bank on 'Economic Participation and the Global Cost of International Assistance in Support of Refugee Subsistence Needs' provides a reliable estimate.

The report shows that when refugees are self-reliant, they rely less on humanitarian aid, and are able to contribute to the local economy in host communities. Creating and supporting self-reliance will also help close the poverty gap between refugees and host communities.

The findings show that encampment has a cost. Refugees residing in camp settings tend to earn less income than those living elsewhere, increasing their dependency on aid.

Economic participation can create a triple win: **increased refugee earnings and reduced poverty, a decreased burden of complementary assistance** for host countries and donors, and additional developmental aid for host countries that benefits both host populations and refugees.

Mexico offers a nice example of how freedom and movement and economic participation is beneficial for all. The Local Integration Programme in Mexico, launched in 2016, relocated over 36,000 refugees to 11 municipalities by 2023. Refugees receive residence and work permits, bus transportation, housing information, and a cash grant for initial expenses. Collaboration with chambers of commerce, private companies, and local authorities ensures efficient job matching. We estimate that 9 in 10 documented refugees participation in the program hold formal jobs, and contribute \$8.5 million in tax revenues to the Mexican economy.

In the Nairobi workshop, attended by Kenya, Uganda, Iran, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Egypt, Zambia, Mexico, Moldova, and Bangladesh, we agreed that the global-level costing strategies have been instrumental in advancing discussions on responsibility- and burden-sharing. However, member states also highlighted that more is needed to link the costed plans to sustainable financing.

As requested by Member States, we have built on the methodology, notably in the areas of education, health, and basic needs, to contextualize and provide a framework for the global costing exercises as well as to account for nuances at the country level.

During the Nairobi workshop, we included presentations from Jordan and Chad that illustrated two examples of how the global framework could be applied at the country level. The country-level costing demonstrated the capability to include various parameters beyond recurrent costs, such as investments and spillovers.

Such country-level analysis will support government-led processes to ensure that the findings are relevant to national policies and dialogues and will allow us to provide more accurate and actionable insights for policy and financing discussions.

Regarding next steps.

In response to Member States feedback during the workshop, UNHCR will clarify the terminology around inclusion, integration, solutions, and durable solutions and the populations/persons of concern covered in the analyses. We have followed up with Member States to disseminate the draft reports and presentations to their technical colleagues in capitals and eagerly await any further comments.

UNHCR deeply appreciates Member States and partners' valuable engagement and active participation throughout this initiative.

We now call on Member States for continued robust engagement to advance this initiative into its next phase focused on national costing exercises based on the framework provided by global costing exercises. UNHCR and the World Bank stand ready to support these efforts and look forward to additional requests to build on the technical work advanced so far.

Thank you.