

**Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's  
Programme (72<sup>nd</sup> Meeting), 20 June 2018**

**Oral Update on Item 5a, UNHCR's coordination of efforts to measure the impacts  
arising from hosting, protecting and assisting refugees**

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

My remarks on this topic will be succinct and divided into three parts. Firstly, a brief review of progress on this exercise. Secondly, a summary of the most salient points to have arisen during the process so far. Thirdly, UNHCR's proposed way forward.

I look forward to any question that you may wish to ask or clarifications that you may wish to seek.

As was highlighted in the text issued to members of the Executive Committee on 28 February, the current effort to measure the impacts arising from hosting, protecting and assisting refugees has a previous history that dates back more than two decades.

In responding to the requirement of General Assembly Resolution of 19 December 2017 (No. 72/150) UNHCR has reviewed the objectives and approaches adopted in the past in order to inform and guide the present exercise.

It is evident that all such efforts have share a common purpose, namely, to generate insights into how greater and more sustainable responsibility sharing can be achieved to address the inequitable distribution of costs incurred by member states that host, protect and assist refugees.

The approaches previously adopted generated some useful insights into the impact and costs of individual refugee situations and sectors. Overall, however, it may be observed that they were insufficiently broad in scope or informed by an agreed methodology – or methodologies - on how to address the larger question of responsibility sharing.

For that reason, as signalled during previous briefings, our current approach is designed to make greater use of technical expertise, drawing not only from international organisations but also from national statistical offices and expertise, to ensure that the chosen methodologies are appropriately designed for the scope of the tasks in question.

By grounding the approach as far as possible in statistically verifiable evidence generated by an agreed methodology, it is our expectation that the resulting data will provide a sound basis for an informed discussion in advance of the anticipated first meeting of the Global Refugee Forum in 2019.

With respect to the key insights and salient points arising from the exchanges with Executive Committee members, perhaps the most consistent element was recognition of the need to strike a balance between the rigour and detail of the methodological approaches and the need to avoid a prolonged search for a perfect formula.

In that respect the time lines imposed both by the UN general Assembly Resolution and by the ongoing deliberations on the text of the Global Compact on Refugees have been helpful. I can reassure Executive Committee members that UNHCR recognises – in our best operational tradition – the need to get the job done. We recognise that quality control will be important to the overall validity of the exercise. But we will not let the perfect become the enemy of the good.

That said, the paper distributed on 28 February usefully highlighted a number of the critical questions arising from the key variables that typically need to be assessed when analysing impact. These included the numbers, demography, and socio-economic profile of the refugee arrivals, the pre-existing development conditions of the areas where refugees arrive, and the ratio of refugees to the local and national population. They also encompassed the stress on fiscal expenditure, on local infrastructure, natural resource consumption, price inflation and the temporary disruption to the equilibrium of local labour markets.

The challenge of disaggregating costs and benefits in order to arrive at an accurate assessment of impact was also reviewed. There was also consideration of how these costs fall inequitably among donors, among and between donors and refugee hosting states, within local economies and communities, and between refugees and local households.

Recognition, too, of how policy choices also affect costs and can increase - or reduce - the scale of offsets that can be achieved through both external measures – through a broader range of public and private sector financing – and internal arrangements – investments that enable refugees to contribute productively to their local communities.

A key contribution to analysing these variables will be the acquisition of sufficient data to compile a convincing evidence base through reaching agreement on appropriate methodologies. These will need to cover both the contributions of donor states and of hosting states. UNHCR has been greatly encouraged by the support of the OECD and the World Bank for this effort. They have already suggested a number of approaches and shared tools and questionnaires that could be adapted and put to good use for our collective purpose.

Member States and civil society organisations too have expressed their interest to contribute. This is greatly appreciated. As expressed on 29<sup>th</sup> May, UNHCR would particularly welcome the engagement of national statistical offices in refugee hosting countries. Let me also recognise the potential support indicated by the European Union for enabling the participation of such national expertise in our future deliberations. It goes without saying that the involvement of expertise from refugee hosting states will add considerably to the validity and credibility of our overall efforts.

Their participation would lend further weight to the ongoing effort at global level led by the Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons statistics and our ongoing cooperation with the World Bank to conduct a particular effort for a specific focus on refugees and refugee impacted communities within poverty assessment instruments such as national Household Budget surveys.

Chair, distinguished delegates

It will be apparent from the above that much work lies ahead of us in the coming months if we are to meet the ambitious schedule and time frame we have proposed. Just to reiterate, our first obligation is to contribute a progress report to the High Commissioner's submission to the General Assembly by August, to convene a first technical meeting of experts around the time of the Executive Committee in September/October this year, to follow up with a second expert consultation early in 2019, and thereafter to commission individual Member state contributions with a view to finalising a draft report in the second half of 2019.

UNHCR nevertheless believes that the investments and steps outlined above will be important in delivering, firstly, a credible evidence base and, secondly, the baseline and a metric that can be used to measure progress towards fairer burden and responsibility sharing as envisaged in paragraph 7 of the current raft text for the Global Compact on Refugees.

Notwithstanding the extensive technical and preparatory work required, our sense in UNHCR is that there is considerable interest and enthusiasm among our interlocutors for undertaking this exercise. We particularly value a participatory approach. I therefore take this opportunity again to invite interested contributors especially from refugee hosting countries to join our effort to address this important subject.