

## UNHCR-WBG JOINT DATA CENTER ON FORCED DISPLACEMENT

*This note outlines a proposal to establish in Copenhagen (Denmark) the Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement (JDC) launched by the World Bank Group (WBG) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The note provides background on the JDC, including its mission statement, operating model, and key objectives.*

*The forced displacement crisis has increased in scale and complexity in recent years.* Its impact is substantial among both the displaced and hosting communities. Forcibly displaced persons face specific vulnerabilities, including loss of assets and psychological trauma, limited rights, lack of opportunities, a protection risk, and a lack of planning horizon. Host communities, which tend to be overwhelmingly in developing countries, and among the poorest in these countries, have to pursue their own development efforts in an environment that has often been transformed by a large inflow of newcomers.

*A new paradigm is emerging to better manage forced displacement situations.* With the September 2016 New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, the United Nations General Assembly called for the development of a Global Compact on Refugees by September 2018. The proposed approach is, *inter alia*, based on a recognition that there needs to be more complementarity between the approaches of humanitarian and development actors in this area.

*Data is central to the success of such efforts.* Global-level data underpin the international agenda and political debates; they drive both social perceptions and the prioritization of interventions across countries. Country-level data are key to policy making and programming and to an effective use of scarce resources; they are needed to build the evidence that can inform the design of host countries' policies; they are also critical for aid resources to be targeted in an optimal manner. The importance of data was emphasized in the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, and in its Annex One, the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), and is a key part of the draft Global Compact on Refugees.

*There is hence a global consensus on the need to invest in better data on forced displacement and to build a library of evidence on 'what works'.* A number of data sets are available, but their quality and their comprehensiveness are often insufficient to allow for sound decision-making. At this stage, the central challenge is to improve the collection and coverage of "micro-data" (e.g., household-levels socio-economic data) in a manner that can ensure quality and timeliness, and that is sustainable (including through the use of country systems where appropriate). Efforts are underway but challenges remain, including methodological issues, practical barriers (access, capacity, etc.), and resource availability.

### **Partnership toward a Joint Data Center**

*The WBG and UNHCR have significantly stepped up the scale and scope of joint initiatives on data and its analysis in recent years.* This has drawn on the experience and insights generated by previous cooperation on a series of analytical studies in the Horn of Africa, the Middle East and the Lake Chad Basin. The two organizations are currently collaborating to improve UNHCR's global registration system, to manage WBG household surveys on forcibly displaced populations, and to prepare for the development of a data library on displaced populations devoted to the acquisition, documentation, cataloging, dissemination and preservation of relevant datasets.

*To further scale up these efforts, UNHCR and the WBG have decided to jointly establish and operate the JDC.* This new cooperation was formalized through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on April 20, 2018.

## **JDC mission statement and operating model**

***The JDC aims to enhance the ability of stakeholders to make timely and evidence-informed decisions that can improve the lives of affected people.*** Relevant stakeholders include decision-makers in host countries and host communities, as well as their partners (humanitarian and development agencies, private sector, civil society) as well as those engaged in global policy-making. Affected people include refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless people, returnees, asylum-seekers, and host communities.

***The focus of the JDC is on the collection, analysis and dissemination of primary microdata.*** Data in the context of the JDC refers to: (i) population data (e.g., aggregate numbers, age and gender disaggregation, location); and (ii) socio-economic data (e.g., anonymized microdata on income, consumption, skills, health status, economic activity). The JDC's work will not include sensitive individual protection-related data (e.g., case interviews).

***The JDC focuses on areas where UNHCR and WBG can achieve better results together*** than they would do alone, including by: (i) pooling their strengths to influence the global agenda on forced displacement data; and, (ii) achieving efficiency gains and developing synergies (e.g. collecting data of interest to both organizations in a single effort).

***The JDC aims to leverage “the mainstream” of both organizations.*** It will not operate as a stand-alone entity, but rather as a catalyst to stimulate forced displacement data work across both institutions. Working from the start towards mainstreaming forced displacement work in both institutions is key for both effectiveness and sustainability. The JDC will hence operate through a mix of self-managed tasks and “outsourced” tasks to relevant parts of the WBG and UNHCR to incentivize cooperation.

***The JDC aims to complement existing efforts by others.*** The JDC will act as an “entity of last resort”, when generating new data sets, and focuses on recognized gaps in the existing systems. It is committed to actively seeking partnership with other stakeholders, including the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (Geneva, Switzerland), the Joint IDP Profiling Service (Geneva, Switzerland), the IOM Data Tracking Monitoring System (Geneva, Switzerland), the IOM Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (Berlin, Germany), and the OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data (The Hague, The Netherlands) – with a view to focusing efforts on areas where needs are highest and to identify synergies in areas where collaboration makes most sense.

***The JDC is established with an initial 4-year time horizon.*** The JDC represents a time bound effort to move the data agenda on forced displacement forward and mainstream it in a coordinated manner in both UNHCR and the WBG. The continued relevance of its mission will be reconsidered after four years, so as to make adjustments to the scope of its work, its structure, or even to reconsider the need for its continued existence. The JDC is expected to be operational by end-summer 2019.

## **JDC objectives**

***The JDC is closely tied to the operational work of both UNHCR and the WBG.*** It aims to focus on providing data that are necessary for decision-making on policies or operations (rather than create data that do not have a specific use). It also aims to provide data and evidence for decision-making to a broader range of stakeholders, including affected countries as well as key bilaterals and multilaterals involved in the setting of the global agenda on these matters.

***The JDC's specific objectives are four-fold:***

- ***To ensure population and socioeconomic data are systematically collected and analyzed;*** this will be achieved for example through household surveys and/or registration exercises; the JDC will initially focus on the countries hosting the largest numbers of “affected people” and where governments are interested in this effort.

- ***To facilitate open access to forced displacement data***, with adequate anonymization protocols and safeguards to ensure adequate protection and privacy for individuals; experience has shown that such a move to “open data” is an effective way to strengthen transparency and quality of data, as well as to stimulate independent research;
- ***To promote innovation*** to enhance forced displacement data; this is expected to include the use of new technologies, and learning from the rapidly-developing data industry;
- ***To strengthen the sustainability of a global data collection system***; such a system should be based on common norms, definitions, and methodologies, building on and extending the work initiated under the auspices of the UN Statistical Commission (EGRIS process); this work will be accompanied by a particular effort to strengthen country-level institutional systems where necessary.