



The Joint Data Center's Strategic Advisory Council

Read-out from the first meeting

UN City, Copenhagen, September 30, 2019

The first Strategic Advisory Council of the World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement was held at UN City, Copenhagen, on September 30, 2019.¹ It was attended by more than 80 participants, including representatives from key refugee hosting countries, member states, bilateral and multilateral agencies, NGOs, private sector partners and refugee organizations.²

The day was opened by Grete Fernemo, Under Secretary-General and Executive Director for UNOPS; with statements from Stephan Schönemann, Under-Secretary for Development Policy, Government of Denmark; Ambassador Mohammed Abdi Affey, UNHCR Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa; Ewen Macleod, Director, Division of Resilience and Solutions, UNHCR; and Xavier Devictor, Manager, World Bank.³

The **primary purpose of the first Strategic Advisory Council was to seek guidance and feedback from council members on a preliminary work program** for the Center for 2020, as well as advise on its execution. Opening speakers set out some core principles that should underpin the work of the Center, including **transparency, technical excellence, operational relevance for both policy dialogue and program design, partnership and complementarity** with the work of others. Björn Gillsäter, Head of the Center, gave an overview of the mission and objectives and outlined the indicative areas of work.⁴

Council **participants** acknowledged that **better support** for refugees, IDPs, stateless people and host communities **depends on the availability of quality data**. Accordingly, the Center will **focus on the systematic collection, analysis, and dissemination of relevant primary micro data**. There was significant interest in the work of the newly established Center from hosting governments and other key stakeholders. There was furthermore agreement that the work should build on what exists, avoid duplication and add value.


Council members expressed **appreciation of, and support for, the Center's mission and objectives**. The Joint Data Center is seen as a concrete expression of how humanitarian

¹ See Annex 1 for Terms of Reference

² See Annex 2 for List of Participants

³ See Annex 3 for Agenda

⁴ See Annex 4 for Power Point presentation



and development organizations can combine their resources and knowledge – in this case – for the purpose of strengthening data and evidence and supporting countries to deliver on the commitments set out in the Global Compact on Refugees.

Participants were **supportive of the proposed areas of work and activities**. They emphasized the importance of aligning the work of the Center with the needs of hosting states and prioritizing activities over time. There was agreement that the work should be **operationally relevant and support program design**. Participants highlighted the need for coordination to efficiently collect data without duplication. There was a strong commitment to jointly support host countries to strengthen national capacity and systems, which would in turn build trust in the Center. Representatives of hosting states highlighted the importance of sharing efforts and expertise as well as lessons learned.

A key theme during the day was the **importance of prioritizing the work of the Center** to ensure that it adds value to dialogue with policy-makers and to programs for refugees and hosting communities, even as **there was broad recognition that results may take time**.


Council participants expressed their **support for collaboration and engagement with the Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics (EGRIS)** and underscored the importance of **country ownership and leadership in the strengthening of national systems and supporting capacity building**. The importance of including displaced populations in existing systems over time was repeatedly stressed. Participants also called for the dissemination of early examples of the inclusion of refugees, for example, in household budget surveys or census exercises.

Support was also expressed for how the Center will be structured and organized, and for the close collaboration between the World Bank and UNHCR. Several participants emphasized the importance of openness and transparency in the work of the Center and its staffing. Continued dialogue with partners and practitioners will be essential to ensure that the Center is relevant to the key stakeholders, focused and widely understood. The importance of listening to refugee voices and ensuring gender diversity was noted.

The **discussions reflected a spirit of partnership and common endeavor**. Several participants noted the need to manage expectations and ensure realistic expectations of what could be produced. All agreed that the work should contribute to improving the lives of all those who are forcibly displaced as a result of conflict and violence although some questioned whether displacement as a result of other factors e.g. climate change might also be included.

There was support for, and interest in, the forthcoming collaboration with the Journal of Development Economics and the planned research conference to be hosted by the Center in January 2020. Council participants furthermore welcomed the first JDC forced displacement literature review which was released at the meeting. They voiced a keen interest in expanding the coverage and dissemination of this deliverable⁵.

⁵ See Annex 5 for JDC's Forced Displacement Literature Review



The Head of the Center noted that the team will refine its work program and priorities to reflect country ownership and move towards open source data as much as possible whilst strictly observing the principles of data protection, confidentiality and security.

Council participants expressed their appreciation for their inclusion in the Strategic Advisory Council and committed to making the Center a success.