

## UNHCR-WORLD BANK GROUP JOINT DATA CENTER (JDC)

### **Background**

*The forced displacement crisis has increased in scale and complexity in recent years.* Its impact is significant for both the displaced and hosting communities. Forcibly displaced persons face specific vulnerabilities, including loss of assets, lack of opportunities and a planning horizon, psychological trauma, limited rights, and protection risks. Host communities, which are overwhelmingly in developing countries, tend to be among the poorest in their countries, and must pursue their own development efforts in an environment that has 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 for Refugees and Migrants, the United Nations General Assembly called for the development of a global compact on refugees by September 2018. The proposed approach recognizes that there needs to be more complementarity between the work of humanitarian and development actors in this area.

*Data is central to the success of such efforts.* At the global level, data underpin the international agenda and political debate, driving both social perceptions and the prioritization of interventions across countries. At the country level, data are critical to policy making and programming; it enables the effective use of scarce resources through targeting in an optimal way. The importance of data was emphasized in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, and in its Annex One, the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). It will be a key part of an effective response under the new global compact on refugees.

*There is 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 already available. To allow for sound decision-making, the central challenge at this stage is to improve the collection and coverage of “micro-data” (e.g., household-level 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 methodology, practical barriers (access, capacity, etc.), and resource availability.

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

*The World Bank Group (WBG) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (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 enhance the analysis of data generated by 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.

### **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; their partners (humanitarian and development agencies, private sector, civil society); and those engaged in global policy-making. Affected people include refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless people, returnees, asylum-seekers, and host communities.

***The JDC will focus 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 will work in areas where UNHCR and WBG can achieve better results together*** than they would individually, 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 core work of both organizations.*** It will not operate as a stand-alone entity, but rather as a catalyst to stimulate forced displacement data work and enable mainstreaming across both institutions. This is key for both effectiveness and sustainability. The JDC will operate through a combination of self-managed and “outsourced” tasks, in cooperation with relevant parts of the WBG and UNHCR.

***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 focus on recognized gaps in existing systems. It is committed to actively seeking partnerships 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 in 2018.

## **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. It also aims to provide data and evidence for decision-making to a broader range of stakeholders, including affected countries as well as key bilateral and multilateral partners involved in setting 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 by the Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics (EGRIS) under the auspices of the UN Statistical Commission. This work will be accompanied by a particular effort to strengthen country-level institutional systems where necessary.

### **Expected outcomes and results within a four-year period**

*The JDC aims to deliver critical outcomes over the four-year period* to fill priority data gaps that have been identified, which may be adjusted as needed to reflect changes over time:

- **Enhanced normative system**. The JDC will build on the work initiated by EGRIS under the UN Statistical Commission, including contributions by both UNHCR and WBG. It will actively participate in ongoing discussions with a view to helping further elaborate and disseminate an effective system of norms, definitions, standards, methodologies, etc., for the collection of population and socio-economic microdata for all categories of affected persons. The JDC will make direct contributions to the process, with a view to leveraging both institutions to support the adoption of the new normative system. A special effort is expected on data related to IDPs and stateless people.
  - Expected outcome: a fully-developed and broadly-owned normative system, endorsed under the UN Statistical Commission, for all groups of affected people.
- **Collection of microdata**. e.g. through household surveys to inform poverty assessments, skills or labor market analyses, etc., including dynamic longitudinal studies that follow people over time. Priority will be given to countries (i) with large numbers of persons of concern; and (ii) where there is scope for an active engagement by development actors. The JDC will outsource such surveys to relevant WBG or UNHCR units, providing strong inputs on the definition of each task and on quality control.
  - Expected outcome: completion of 12 such studies over the period, including preparation of data sets and analysis.
- **Capacity-building**. The JDC will provide hands-on technical assistance as may be needed by national and other institutions to internalize and operationalize the new normative system for the collection of socio-economic microdata. This will focus on countries where household surveys are undertaken. These tasks will be undertaken either directly by the JDC or through relevant WBG or UNHCR units.
  - Expected outcome: at least 10 countries with the capacity to conduct regular microdata surveys that include affected people.
- **Data management**. The JDC will establish a system for the management of microdata. This will include improved data collection systems that utilize innovative technology, data cleaning and

curation systems, data anonymization, data filing for open access (microdata library), data dissemination and data representation for the use of policy makers. In particular, the JDC will develop adequate protocols for addressing protection and privacy concerns, so that anonymized socio-economic microdata can be widely accessible to stakeholders and researchers (“open data”). The library will be linked to other systems (e.g., WBG, UNHCR, OCHA, etc.). This task will be managed directly by the JDC.

- Expected outcome: a well-functioning and widely accessible library of microdata established and maintained.
- ***Innovation.*** The JDC will aim to pilot the use of innovative technologies, and the transfer of lessons from the data industry, in the area of forced displacement. This will be done through participation in relevant technical fora, through focused analytical work, and through the establishment of a competitive “venture fund” to crowdsource innovative ideas, including from the private sector and civil society, and provide seed support for their early development.
  - Expected outcome: three innovative and large-scale ideas brought to fruition.
- ***Flagship analyses.*** The JDC will publish two analytical pieces a year that will aim to draw lessons from, or stimulate further debate relevant to the global data collection exercise. This could include work on the mapping of contributions by refugee-hosting states; on stateless populations; etc. The analytical work will also aim to continuously test new data for quality and analytical usefulness and identify possible improvements through primary research, subcontracted research, interactions with other data users, etc.
  - Expected outcome: two high-quality, analytical pieces a year.
- ***Dissemination of data and analysis, and community of practice.*** The JDC will develop a community of practice among stakeholders who are engaged in the collection, analysis, and dissemination of forced displacement data – including through an annual conference with high visibility, under the auspices of key donors to the JDC.
  - Expected outcome: a functioning community of practice and a wide acknowledgment of the JDC as one of the centers of effort to strengthen microdata collection, analysis, and dissemination for affected populations.

### **Institutional structure**

***The JDC will be jointly owned and managed by UNHCR and the WBG, with adequate checks and balances in its governance structure.*** It will be governed by a Steering Committee with equal representation by both institutions, and managed by a manager and deputy manager. The Chair of the Steering Committee and the Deputy Manager will belong to one organization, the Deputy Chair and the Manager to the other, which may be rotated between the two entities.

***The JDC will have a lean and dynamic structure,*** consistent with its mission to be an enabler and catalyst leveraging the core functions of both institutions, rather than doing most of the work directly. It is expected to include staff seconded to the JDC by both institutions.

***The JDC will be located in Copenhagen, Denmark.*** It will not be housed in WBG or UNHCR in line with its mission to serve as an enabler and catalyst. The location was selected through a transparent process, based on the requirements for the JDC to achieve its objectives. Criteria for selection included availability of financial resources, ease of access to the data industry and interactions with stakeholders. Interested countries were invited to submit a proposal, which were assessed by an independent committee of senior experts. A recommendation was presented to UNHCR and WBG management for a final decision.