



FORCED MIGRATION REVIEW

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Forced Migration Review (FMR) is an independent journal published three times a year by the Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford. It presents concise, accessible articles on forced displacement in a magazine, with each issue focused on a particular theme. FMR is published in English, French, Spanish and Arabic, and is available free in print and online. It has readers in more than 170 countries, predominantly in the 'global South', with readers and authors from the humanitarian, development and research communities.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The objective of this activity was to enhance FMR's coverage of issues relating to data on displaced people and host communities, in order to stimulate further work on displacement data and promote the use of evidence, for the benefit of displaced and host communities. Specifically, the JDC supported:

- The solicitation, publication and dissemination of articles relating to data and evidence on forced displacement; and
- The development of FMR's digital strategy, in order to: (a) guide the development of FMR's digital capability to effectively disseminate the publication; and (b) enhance FMR's capacity to monitor readership, and engagement across all channels (print, web and social media).

RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

JDC funding supported the achievement of several results and outcomes, including:

- **The inclusion of specific questions on data and evidence in FMR's call for articles.** This led to an increase in the number of offers and submitted articles addressing data and evidence on forced displacement.
- **Publication of a mini feature on data and displacement.** In the mini feature, published in March 2021 ([FMR 66](#)), authors discussed recent advances in gathering and using data, the challenges and gaps that remain, and innovative approaches to data collection some that came out of the Covid pandemic. The mini feature comprised four articles. The online (English HTML) versions received over 1,200 views, in addition to numerous downloads of the pdf versions, circulation of print copies, and views of the HTML versions in other languages. The [article by Ewen Macleod](#) received the highest number of views, reflecting current interest among FMR's readership in the ethical challenges of collecting and sharing the personal information of vulnerable populations, a topic that could be explored in another mini-feature.
- **Sensitization of FMR team to the importance of data and evidence on forced displacement.** Working with the JDC on the mini feature including the crafting of questions in the call for articles helped sensitize the FMR team to the issues related to the data of forced migration topics. For the *Knowledge, voice and power* issue, the team considered the intersection of data and diversity, voice and inclusion, and included a question on this in the call for articles. This led to offers of several articles about this theme which might not have otherwise been forthcoming. Additionally, issues around data and evidence are coming to the front of the mind of FMR editors when they select articles for publication.

- **Enhanced understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of FMR’s digital presence.** To inform the digital strategy, the FMR team contracted a consultant to help them conduct a comprehensive assessment of FMR’s digital presence. This included: (a) an assessment of existing digital channels and the creation of baseline data reports; (b) collecting audience insights through interviews with representatives of key audience segments; (c) identifying areas of excellence and those needing improvement; and (d) data analytic ‘deep-dives’ of the FMR website and social media to identify the trends over the last five years. The assessment highlighted the lack of functionality for casual users of the website to access related content through links to articles on similar themes.
- **Enhanced understanding of FMR’s digital readership.** The assessment has also enabled the FMR team to understand the demographics, needs and preferences of their digital audience. It revealed that the website is most popular amongst the 18-25 age group, - students and early career professionals including policymakers. The magazine-style format of the publication appeals to these readers and engaging them is important given they are likely to be the future researchers in the forced displacement field.
- **Preparation of FMR’s digital strategy.** JDC funding enabled the FMR team to carve out time each week to devote to strategic thinking and development of the digital strategy. The digital strategy aims to improve the quality of FMR’s digital channels, grow FMR’s digital audiences, and use digital data insights in decision-making. It has enabled the team to develop a compelling business case and realistic costings for a revamped website, which they can now take to donors for funding. The team is already acting on the ‘low hanging fruit’ identified in the strategy, such as establishing a LinkedIn profile.
- **Enhanced capacity for digital analytics and using digital analytics for decision making.** The FMR editor worked alongside the consultant to ‘upskill’ on digital analytics. The consultant also trained the FMR team on website and social media analytics to help them develop dashboards for monitoring digital analytics which are reviewed by the team every month. The team has a better understanding of what analytics can do, which is empowering them to frame and discuss questions about the impact of digital articles such as which webpages young people in Africa are viewing.
- **‘Culture change’ within the FMR team.** The process of developing the digital strategy and the publication of the mini feature on data and evidence helped catalyze cultural change within the FMR team. While some elements of the digital strategy require funding such as the renovation of FMR’s website, the team is already reorientating from print to digital, and using digital analytics to monitor and make decisions. The FMR team is also more aware of the relevance of data in all their work, and they intend to include a question about data and evidence in all future calls for articles.

CHALLENGES

- **The COVID pandemic required the team to work remotely and limited opportunities for in-person collaboration.** The team greatly appreciated JDC’s willingness to be flexible on the timeline for deliverables, to enable the full scope of work to be completed.
- **Lack of timelines and budgets in the digital strategy.** While the digital strategy establishes a direction and roadmap, it doesn’t include specific timelines and budgets. This reflects the existing funding model for FMR (based on number of issues per year) and the lack of a concrete budget for the implementation of the strategy. Additionally, the FMR team is in transition with the imminent retirement of one of the current Co-editors and the onboarding of a new Deputy Editor who has experience in digitization and can assist with its implementation.

LESSONS LEARNED AND JDC'S ROLE

The outcomes of this project demonstrate that the process is often as important as the product. It would be useful to consider this at the concept stage for future JDC-supported projects by asking, "How do you think your organizational strategy and culture will change as a result of this activity?"

The FMR team appreciated the collaborative approach taken by the JDC and the organization's emphasis on substance, without the condition to mention the JDC in FMR publications. The work by the JDC focal point to coordinate and review articles for the mini feature was valued highly. Additionally, discussions with the JDC focal person helped the FMR team to refine objectives and to reach an understanding of expected deliverables.

An opportunity that was missed in the collaboration with the JDC was leveraging the relationship to promote the data mini feature. Additional promotion through JDC's website, newsletter, and social media, or a jointly hosted panel event with authors would have helped raise the profile of the JDC as FMR's readership is extensive (an FMR launch event for a previous issue had 500 registrations and 165 attendees). FMR would be interested in further collaborations with JDC and in looking at ways to support the implementation of the digital strategy, such as a future issue on data and ethics, which could be launched through a virtual event with authors hosted jointly by JDC and FMR.

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