



# JDC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE MID-TERM REVIEW

March 7, 2023

## OVERALL FEEDBACK

The management of the World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement (JDC) would first like to acknowledge and thank the KPMG International Development Advisory Services (IDAS) for conducting the Mid-Term Review of the Center’s “mission and objectives, and the effectiveness of its structure and business model”. We acknowledge the timeliness of the Review, as well as the high-quality, thoughtful, and insightful findings.

The JDC commissioned this review to an external and independent entity as part of its commitment to learning and accountability but also with the view of identifying lessons for strategic reorientation of the JDC’s business model, activities, and partnerships. We take note of the limitations in terms of low response rates to the surveys, the low coverage of key stakeholders such as the National Statistics Offices and the anecdotal value of the case studies, which combined calls for a cautious interpretation of the findings.

Management appreciates the Report’s finding that the JDC’s vision, mission and strategic objectives are highly relevant to the global forced displacement agenda, with its focus on increasing access and use of socioeconomic data and evidence on forcibly displaced and stateless people being a direct response to system-wide gaps identified across multiple dimensions. We furthermore appreciate the finding that the Center has contributed to enabling closer collaboration between the parent institutions, which in the long term will bring about collaborations beyond the production and use of socioeconomic data.

Management acknowledges the call for additional efforts to ensure the Center’s operations are fully in line with the global priorities and the needs of key stakeholders. In particular, we note the concern that the Center’s purpose and relevance may not be fully understood across its parent institutions. In terms of impact on decision-making processes, Management shares KPMG’s observation that it is still too early to demonstrate and ascertain its impact in terms of enhancing the ability of stakeholders to make data and evidence-informed decisions.

We share the acknowledgement of the challenges inherent when establishing an ambitious endeavor. JDC brings together two established institutions with long-standing practices, lines of collaboration with various stakeholders with possible divergent interests and ways of operating, and they do so in difficult political contexts. This challenge was further compounded by disruptions

brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic soon after the Center started its operations. Notably, many donors have diverted their funding priorities to the COVID-19 pandemic and later also the Ukraine crisis, which has affected the Center's fundraising prospects during the first three years.

JDC's Management believes that the Center has positioned itself as a catalytic – and in some sense disruptive - actor in the forced displacement space. As such, Management is pleased to note the report's observation that *"JDC has been successful in operationalizing core elements of the vision on which it was founded. It has been effective in scaling up in short order, staffing a center, establishing an administration, solidifying working relationships with a wide array of stakeholders, and launching a range of activities in line with a well-developed strategy that benefited from wide consultation and stakeholder buy-in; this occurred in the midst of COVID-19"*.

Finally, Management welcomes the forward-looking components of the review and appreciates the pertinence of some of its findings for ongoing discussions regarding the Center's strategic focus for the period 2024-27. As such, the Review's insights and recommendations will certainly help the Center, JDC's Management Committee, and the Strategic Advisory Council in devising a common vision for the next four years.

## **SPECIFIC RESPONSES ON THE 19 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In reviewing the specific recommendations, JDC Management assessed their possible implications for future course-correction and related monitoring and follow-up. The recommendations provide useful pointers for improvement, with some of them being already discussed and/or acted upon by the Center. Please find below the detailed responses to the 19 recommendations of the Mid-Term Review:

1. *The JDC should **continue to contribute to relevant high-level fora and engagements to further socialize and embed the role of socioeconomic data** within the normative framework relevant to forced displacement. To this end, partners such as OCHA HDX, JIPS and IOM stress a need for continued collaboration and alignment on strategic and technical issues.*

Management appreciates the Review's call for continued presence at high-level global events and to be the voice for increased investment in and use of socioeconomic data on forced displacement. This is a recognition of the pioneering – and sometimes bold – steps that the Center has taken during its first three years of existence to transform the data landscape on forced displacement. Management is also pleased that key actors such as OCHA, JIPS and IOM express their wish for sustained strategic and technical collaboration as part of our collective efforts to bring about a lasting change in the quantity, quality, availability, and use of socioeconomic data and evidence on forcibly displaced people.

2. *In line with its ambition to act as a convener and catalyzer, and to become a thought leader on data relevant to forced displacement, the JDC should consider elaborating a **'Forced Displacement Data Gap Report'** with gap-specific metrics.*

Management appreciates this recommendation which is in line with a forced displacement data mapping exercise the Center initiated in 2022 as parts of the discussions on the new strategy. The conclusion of this mapping exercise will help decide what a suitable and sustainable format could be for such a report, if deemed a priority. Further discussions will be extended to the two parent institutions and other partners given that strategically such a report should be fully owned by the two parent institutions and may serve as one of the key mechanisms to sustain the collaboration between the World Bank and UNHCR beyond JDC's existence.

3. *In preparation for a second mandate of the JDC, its parent organizations should specifically investigate the extent to which the Center's work has become embedded in World Bank and UNHCR engagement at different operational levels and seek to identify any barriers limiting use of the JDC's outputs in operations and policy dialogue.*

Management agrees with the need to increase the use of data and evidence produced through JDC-funded activities in operations and policy dialogue. In fact, the Center has initiated a review and assessment of ways of increasing the sustainability of its current efforts over the long term as part of its new strategy for the period 2024-27. Concrete approaches and indicators of achieving sustainability of JDC's contributions will be identified through consultations with its parent organizations.

4. *In order to generate insights into the operationalization of the humanitarian-development nexus as facilitated by their joint collaboration on socioeconomic data, the JDC's parent organizations may consider commissioning a dedicated study on this aspect of their partnership.*

Management takes note of this fourth recommendation. However, to demonstrate how the humanitarian-development nexus has been operationalized through JDC work, Management would prefer an approach in which country case studies of successful development-humanitarian nexus can be showcased as good practices. This operationalization can be also discussed as part of a regular report mentioned under Recommendation 2.

5. *Opportunities for building operational partnerships with other stakeholders under Strategic Objective 2 should be considered for the sake of scaling and promoting technical exchange. To this end, the JDC may consider incorporating a mentorship criterion within its activity selection process, including mentorship as a metric within its results framework and/or developing an activity to support a mentorship model specifically targeting national civil society partners.*

Management disagrees with this recommendation which it believes is outside of the remit of the Strategic Objective 2. To achieve a sustainable transformation of the availability and use of the socioeconomic data in forced displacement, the Center must focus on governments (national statistical offices and policy makers) and international institutions

and organizations supporting governments in this respect. The Center does not understand the relevance of mentorships for national civil society partners, for the JDC.

6. *Engaging national statistics offices in capacity building should remain a strategic and operational priority across relevant Strategic Objectives. The JDC, through its parent organizations may consider opportunities to establish a technical working group model to regularly engage with NSOs in countries where JDC's activities are being delivered. Such a collaboration model with NSOs can be integrated or reflected within the contexts of national UNSDCF<sup>1</sup>, World Bank Country Partnership Framework (or relevant operations) or Humanitarian Program Cycles where appropriate. UNHCR, as part of the UN system, can help JDC Management operationalize such efforts, especially in the context of UNSDCF and Humanitarian Program Cycles.*

The recommendation on capacity building of national statistics offices resonates well with the Center's efforts to ensure that national entities such as NSOs are at the center of official data and statistics production, and that they acquire the necessary skills for generating, analyzing and dissemination data on forced displacement. Statistical inclusion in national data collection systems – a cornerstone of the Center's efforts to bring about a lasting and transformational change – will not be possible without NSOs having the required capacity to take the lead in production and use of data on forced displacement. The Center is suggesting a strong emphasis on further stepping up support to capacity building activities in the Strategy for 2024-27, building on what was achieved over the past three years in collaboration with its parent institutions, stakeholders such as EGRISS, UN agencies, regional commissions, academia and international NGOs. As such, Management acknowledges the suggestion to create a technical working group as a conduit for streamlining capacity building activities. However, it prefers to assess where the Center's efforts towards efficient capacity building may be best placed in further consultations with World Bank, UNHCR, select NSOs, EGRISS and other key actors in this space. Furthermore, it is worth noting that for any national surveys and censuses, it is standard practice for NSOs to establish a technical working group involving all relevant stakeholders, and JDC will participate in those as appropriate, in coordination with UNHCR and World Bank country teams.

7. *In capitalizing on its role as a convener, catalyzer and thought leader (learning propagator), the JDC should seek to further elaborate and establish the Knowledge Agenda with clear and manageable timelines of activities and metrics, in close cooperation with relevant departments of its parent organizations.*

This recommendation is in line with both the steps the Center is already taking in developing the Center's Knowledge Agenda and those it considers taking to establish the agenda as a critical pillar in its Strategy for 2024-27. In fact, the Center has developed in 2022 a full concept note that outlines specific activities - *Data and evidence mapping*

*exercises; Development of a “marketplace” for researchers and practitioners; Knowledge papers; and Technical training and capacity building modules* – aiming to address the need to identify and fill knowledge gaps, and to strengthen the link between research and operations. The concept note which was presented to the SAC in August 2022 will be further discussed with the Management Committee and is expected to be a key component of the Center’s new strategy. Ultimately, this agenda will help the Center become the go-to-place for knowledge on forced displacement.

8. *In continuing to leverage the combined weight and influence of its parent organizations and remaining mindful of the JDC’s intention to catalyze actions across the system without becoming a fixture of the system itself, within its second mandate, the JDC should maintain a strategic emphasis on curating a portfolio of activities and partnerships that serve the higher objective of system transformation. To this end, the JDC may consider carrying out the 2023 portfolio review in consultation with focal points from relevant departments of its parent organizations.*

Management appreciates this recommendation and notes that the Center is taking such steps as part of the process of developing the Strategy 2024-27. Over the past few months, the Center has undertaken a stocktaking exercise that identified major takeaways from the Center’s achievements in the first three years. Key activities conducted as part of this exercise included a data gap mapping, data science workshop, and consultations on the Knowledge Agenda. World Bank and UNHCR colleagues were involved in these activities whose conclusions will inform the Center’s new strategy. The Center furthermore intends to undertake a thorough consultation process on the Strategy for 2024-27 as a whole with its parent organizations.

9. *For the sake of mainstreaming new data collection methods, tools and approaches, as well as further collaboration in deriving analysis and buy-in for results, JDC-supported data collection activities should continue to emphasize partnership with other operational actors, including international NGOs and national civil society organizations.*

Partnership is a cornerstone of the JDC and the activities it funds. As such, Management concurs with this recommendation and will strive to ensure that country programs and operations in charge of data collection activities collaborate with relevant stakeholders for better synergies and to avoid duplication of efforts. Where country-level partnerships are successful in developing or adapting new data collection methods, tools and approaches, the Center will work to mainstream progress by catalyzing wider information sharing and technical exchange and supporting teams to disseminate generalizable methodological advances.

10. *In optimizing the potential for new data and evidence to be utilized by decision makers, the JDC must ensure prioritization of data collection activities in response to clear evidence gaps and*

*demand. To this end, the 2023 portfolio review may consider how the 'demand' criterion has been applied in the selection of JDC-supported data collection activities and the framing of demand as linked to priority policy objectives.*

Management acknowledges the suggestion to pay more attention to the “demand” criterion in the selection of JDC-supported activities. In particular, Management would like to build on the experience accumulated over the past three years, leveraging its knowledge of forced displacement situations, momentum for inclusion in national statistics and partnerships, to further narrow in on tangible policy and programming opportunities for which the Center can support data and evidence production. This will be further articulated in the new strategy, building on the foundations laid out in the current criteria for activity selection.

- 11. Building on successes to date in filling data and evidence gaps and enhancing data accessibility, future investments should prioritize travel along the data transformation arc, ensuring that data is incorporated within key humanitarian and development frameworks and outputs such as Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNO), Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) and UNSDCF, and where appropriate, bespoke platforms and dashboards.*

To ensure that data produced is used for informing operations and development programs targeted towards forcibly displaced populations, the data creation should be an integral part of country-level humanitarian and development frameworks. It is, however, important to note that achieving such an objective is best led by country operations and programs of its parent institutions that are in a better position to engage with national authorities and other partners at the country level. The JDC may use its comparative advantage in facilitating collaboration between the parent organizations as a way of bringing together World Bank and UNHCR teams at country level for better synergies in achieving such an objective. Management notes that the recommendation focuses on humanitarian and development frameworks and outputs such as Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNO), Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) and UNSDCF. The Center, however, wants to emphasize that the production of data, in particular, needs to be incorporated in national development plans and programs of a broader remit of development partners. This is central to advancing on the “data transformation arc”. Achieving greater development and humanitarian collaboration and better integration of approaches is only useful if it helps making national development plans more efficient, targeted, and successful in improving living conditions of all population groups.

- 12. Further buttressing the ongoing cultural shift within UNHCR towards the value and utility of data accessibility, and to create more global visibility for the promise of socioeconomic data in improving outcomes for forcibly displaced populations, JDC's communications team should work with its parent organizations to showcase personal experiences of affected populations.*

Management concurs with this recommendation. To note, UNHCR is already producing human stories from which the Center can feed into with good examples to demonstrate the value and utility of socioeconomic data produced through JDC-funded activities in improving outcomes for forcibly displaced populations. JDC will also seek such opportunities with other partners.

13. *In further substantiating the JDC's continued relevance to forced displacement crises and ensuring that learning from activities within the portfolio represent a 'public good', the Center may consider the development of process-tracing case studies that demonstrate how investments made under specific Strategic Objectives evolve and materialize in the form of evidence-based decision-making within contexts of forced displacement.*

Management agrees with recommendation regarding process-tracing case studies, and the Center has in fact already taken steps in that direction. The Center has contracted an expert to conduct studies in Kenya and Colombia, two important contexts of forced displacement where significant policy changes have taken place supporting better inclusion of refugees in systems and services. The main objective is to gain insight on how socioeconomic microdata and analysis may have influenced policy changes affecting forcibly displaced populations. Potential affirmative findings of the link between socioeconomic data and evidence to policy development will be leveraged as examples to replicate through other data and evidence producing activities that the Center is and will take forward.

14. *In order to incentivize utilization of data already gathered and advance analysis on priority policy issues, the JDC should continue to build relationships with the research community – particularly researchers hailing from countries facing forced displacement crises.*

Management agrees with this recommendation, which is line with current efforts towards greater involvement of local researchers in valuing existing data for informing operations, and programming by development and humanitarian partners. The Center's activities under Strategic Objective 2 already include one example of such collaboration. We intend to develop others in the future. To this effect, the JDC's Research Conference on Forced Displacement offers an opportunity to create linkages and networks with local researchers. The Center's emerging Knowledge Agenda is also contributing with concepts of how to improve the connection between the research community (including those based in countries affected by forced displacement) on one hand, and data users such as government actors, development and humanitarian stakeholders in host countries on the other hand. These ideas and experiences will be further reinforced to form a part of the Center's next strategy.

15. *To strengthen collaboration and ensure that feedback loops between the JDC and its parent organizations are being leveraged in delivering activities that are both mutually beneficial and*

*contribute to embedding patterns of cooperation, JDC's parent organizations should develop metrics for tracking and reporting on such cooperation.*

Management views this recommendation as a call for the JDC to closely align its activities with and embed them within the operations of its parent organizations to ensure greater ownership and sustainability. The Center will strive to further strengthen the feedback loops between the JDC and relevant departments within the parent organizations as part of efforts to monitor and assess progress towards optimal levels of cooperation and sustainability. In the forthcoming Strategy, the Center intends to indicate what it sees as relevant criteria for measuring the sustainability of its work beyond its second mandate.

16. *To better clarify the pathway from JDC's outputs to its desired outcomes, the Center should conduct a comprehensive risk analysis and develop a risk mitigation strategy to be embedded in its theory of change.*

Management takes good note of this recommendation. As parts of its process of developing the next strategy, the Center will develop a risk assessment and mitigation framework as part of its theory of change.

17. *The JDC, in consultation with its parent organizations, should convene the Management Committee for an extraordinary session to consider challenges for consistent participation within the Management Committee and take stock of expectations of members as regards engagement and contributions.*

Management disagrees with this recommendation. While acknowledging such challenges, Management believes that the appropriate channel to address them is through its members directly, including the parent organizations.

18. *The JDC, in consultation with its parent organizations, should consider possible structural and thematic reconfigurations for the Strategic Advisory Council that contribute to streamlining engagement across different stakeholder categories and thematic areas of work.*

Management notes the challenges expressed by respondents about the Strategic Advisory Council and is keen on engaging with SAC members for a better understanding and streamlining of its role. Management however has reservations about a new format or reconfiguration of the SAC, especially if it entails additional work for our parent institutions and therefore, ultimately, more expectations and constraints on the Center's work.

19. *To address both its low disbursement rates and its desire to strengthen the linkage between research and operations, the JDC should increase its focus and funding for activities under its third Strategic Objective.*



Managements does not understand this recommendation and finds it an incorrect assessment to link low disbursement rates and increased funding for the third strategic objective, ie “Enhance safe and responsible data access” (SO 3). The Review appears to assess resource management on a year-by-year basis whereas we believe that the program should be reviewed over the entire period, including progress during 2023. We find that activities under SO 3 are well progressed and to a large extent “owned” by UNHCR, ie mainstreamed.

The link between research and operations is addressed under SO4, where the JDC intends to increase investment in support of a Knowledge Agenda. While JDC Management does not think that an increased focus on and funding for the current SO 3 would directly strengthen the link between research and operations (it would rather enable it), we do think it would be valuable to scope ways that the JDC could actively contribute to strengthening this link, in part by building on and applying the tools developed under the current SO 3.